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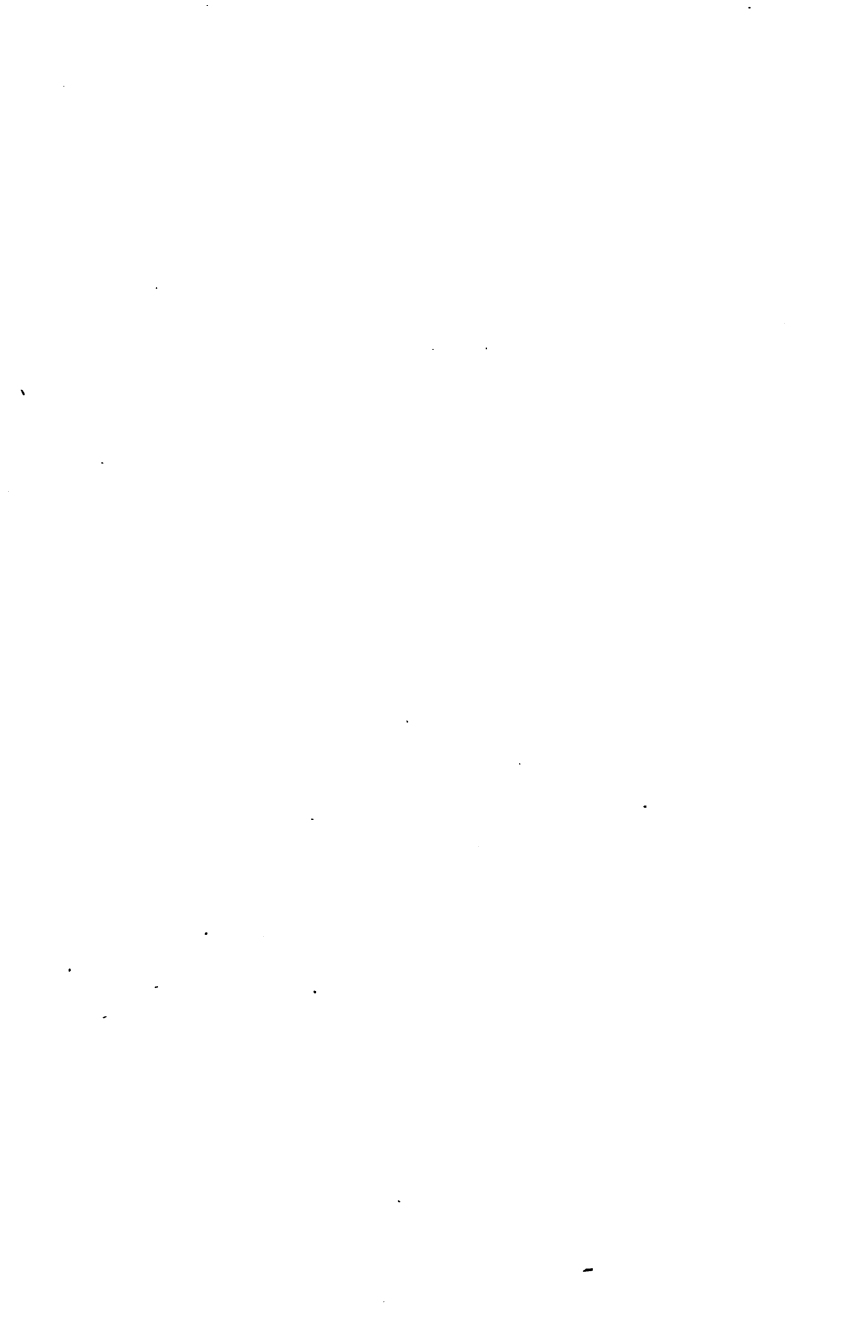
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Jane Allen:
Senior

is swell.

By
Edith Bancroft

Author of
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Allen: Right Guard," "Jane Allen:
Center," "Jane Allen: Junior," Etc.

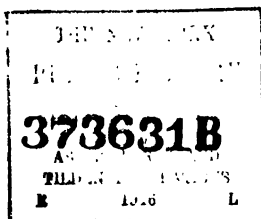
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New York
Cupples & Leon Company

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Jane Allen: Senior

Printed in U. S. A.

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Jane Allen: *Senior*

CHAPTER I

GROWING UP

IT was not Jane's fault. And there are so many like her in the great world of girls, attractive with personality, fortunate with home and a wonderful father, popular with her many friends, and withal—good looking. Should not such a list of attributes make any girl happy? But does it, really?

So it was not her fault that in her senior year at college she found herself without that one positive asset that makes for real security and self confidence; she had no profession, she had no business training, and she was not sure just how she would earn a living if that possibility should ever present itself.

"But why, why?" demanded Judith Stearns irritatedly. "One would think you were going in for horrid politics or some other modern fad." There was scorn in every word Judith uttered, although it failed to ring true.

"Don't be silly, Judy. I am not going *in* for anything. I am simply going *out* for work. I don't like this homage business. It's about as comfortable as being the model for our marble statue. Not that I am a model," she hastened to qualify, "but you all seem to think that your love suffices."

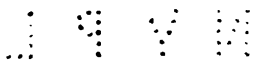
"There you go! Scorning our love. And I just came over to lay a new bunch of it at your feet." Judith glanced down at the feet. "Rather 'nifty' little shoes. Where'd you get 'em?"

"All right, Judy, if you are not interested I'll talk to Dozia. I am just human enough to want company in this work." Jane sat down decidedly. She was either disappointed or pretending to be.

"Oh, I'll tag along, if that's all you want. You can count on me for the follow up—I believe that's what they call the tail end. But Jane, I hate to see you do it."

"Why, Judy?"

"Maybe you'll get your hands all—dir-tee!"



"No doubt of it."

"And you'll be bobbing your hair."

"Not likely."

"And you will be sure to adopt mannish clothes."

"They're the best thing this season."

"And worst of all, you'll be away from the fun." This was said with complete and absolute decision.

"Fun?" Jane slanted her gray eyes until they took on their famous steely glints. "Judy, what fun is there in romping along through this life like a set of irresponsible children? True, we've done things, in a way, but not in a very big way." She tossed her head until the red gold hair threatened to break through a perfectly good and perfectly matched invisible net. Some few ringlets always did break out about her forehead and around her neck, but they only proved the rule of tidiness and approved outside the confines.

"I like—that!" drawled Judith, "after all the wonderful things that have happened all through our other years, Jane Allen! You are the most ungrateful girl!" The charge was contradicted by the affectionate tone. Judith loved Jane.

"Exactly. They happened. But who can depend upon happenings for, well—for a living, for instance?"

"Say, Jane, I honestly do believe you are plotting to support someone."

"I am."

"Is he—good looking?"

"Handsome."

"Oh!" Judith sat up straight and her own dark eyes twinkled. "I think I'll join your labor squad, or whatever it is. A handsome man alters the situation entirely."

Jane chuckled. The irrepressible Judy was to be depended upon always, and her excuse for "coming in" on the proposition, merely afforded her a pleasant way of capitulating.

"Do you know, Jude, what it will honestly mean?"

"I'll join the union. Then I defy you." Judith slumped further down in the big chair. Her dark head made an additional figure in the brilliant cretonne background, and it was quite as pretty as the painted ladies in their effective coiffures.

"It's two hundred hours field work," announced Jane, placidly.

"Two hundred hours in one piece!"

"Oh, no, of course not. Two hundred hours are required by the course," Jane explained.

"Oh, I breathe easier," moaned Judith. "I could just see you plugging out two hundred hours—why mercy me! That would bring you up to Christmas."

"But Jude, darling. Do you know what field work means?"

"Surest thing. He's the fellow who stops the ball."

"Well Judy, if you aren't going to be sane over this, as I said before, I'll ask Dozia. But you know I always like you, pest that you are."

"Pest that you am, sounds newer," suggested Judith. "Though why you should be out gunning for pests, with all this college full and swarming over——"

Jane jumped up and tossed her note book down on the small desk. "I see you are still an infant," she declared querulously. "I hoped you would be growing up in this senior year. Land knows, you need maturity."

"But it's so unbecoming. I had it on the other day when mother asked me to itemize the store bill, and it almost spoiled my pretty forehead. Jane dear, you run along and make all the arrangements. I assure you I'll be ready for your labor

squad when the whistle blows," and Judith dusted the crumbs from the fudge box into a white palm, then she spilled the palm into a scoop of very pretty lips. Judith was pretty, and each year paid her further compliments; her own statement against maturity to the contrary.

"You really want to take this interesting course, Judith?"

"I really do, strange as it may seem for a young thing like me."

"Then you will have to give up most of the sports."

"Which most?"

"Field work is compelling." Jane was too interested in her subject to be thrown off the track by Judith's frivolity. "You see, the cases must be attended to when they are assigned to students, and if there happened to be a basketball game, or worse yet, a football game——"

"I'd run and leave the case to Janie," confessed Judith shamelessly.

"I believe you. That is, you would leave some cases. But how about the handsome——"

"That was just what I was going to ask you," interrupted Judith. "How about the handsome young man? Do I get him for my case?"

"Oh girl! Harken to this!" begged Jane.

"When a social service case is assigned a student she takes it, body and bones——"

"I agreed to that with the handsome young man——"

A fit of laughter, punctuated with moans and groans, confessed Jane's defeat. It was useless to try to make Judith pay any sort of attention. She was enjoying the very idea of Jane doing anything outside of college, and while the Social Service course was vague and novel to her, it did present some attractive possibilities. There was the case with the young man in it, for instance. Jane had said nothing about a *young* man, but Judith had easily conjured one up and equipped him with the most fascinating personality.

"Sign me up," she ordered as Jane slipped into her sport coat. "Are you going over to that office now?"

"Yes, and if you really want to take this course you had better tag along," said Jane, squashing her hat on firmly. "Otherwise, I'll pick up any well disposed student who crosses my path. I need a side partner in this."

"Then, I suppose I'll have to tear myself away from this lovely chair. I think these chairs are a distinct addition to Wellington," she remarked

facetiously. "I like the cretonnes. They're becoming, although I might have liked blue where the orange is."

"After Princeton's victory? What's the use, Judith. Yale may be notable for your Mr. Blair, but it is not to be considered when the orange tackles it on the big field. I think Walker showed rare discrimination in her choice of chair covers."

"I don't suppose she even knows they contain either orange or blue," remarked Judith, running a finger along the colorful pattern, "but I love Yale blue."

"You may. He's really quite a nice chap," conceded Jane. "Now, let us see what sort of field worker you will make. Hurry along. I have an appointment."

"Do I wear a uniform?" inquired Judith.

"Not exactly. But you can't wear flashy sport clothes when in the field. Joking aside, Judith, we are going in for a serious piece of work in this new course, and if you sign up for it you will have to forget a lot of nonsense."

"I'll try," drawled the dark haired girl. "In fact I'll do more than that for your handsome young man. Wait a moment until I get my big sweater. I feel the chill of this social service wave already," and she did finally succeed in

getting into some out door garments and presently tagged along after Jane.

It was the beginning of the second month at Wellington, and the two seniors, Jane Allen and her chum Judith Stearns, were, as has been intimated, preparing to take up the Social Service course in addition to their regular college studies. It was entirely Jane's idea. She insisted she must be prepared with a real, practical working knowledge of the general social side of life, when the day would come for Wellington to give her a degree. During her vacation she had talked it over with her father, that very likable gentleman out in Montana, and while he did not exactly fancy the idea of his attractive daughter going in for "slumming," as he insisted upon designating the social service idea, he did not oppose it. It would, he admitted, give Jane a valuable working knowledge of other classes, also it would do a lot of good for those in need of such investigating and assistance, but he hoped, and he made this much stronger than a mere hope, she would not go in so deeply that she would fall a victim to the cause. He did not want Jane to devote a promising young life to a restricted career.

As for Aunt Mary—that gentle little body

who stood in the place of mother to the girl her brother's wife had left in her care almost at babyhood—she was appalled. The very last word she called out to Jane as the train left was: "Be careful of yourself, my dear, when you are out on those dangerous cases." It was easy to imagine Aunt Mary's apprehension, for, as a matter of fact, the cases are not only sure to be interesting but they are apt to be complicated.

Even so they were now to be undertaken, and Jane and Judith were bound for the office of the secretary of this special course. It was outside Wellington proper, and had only been recognized as a profession since college graduates were required by the Social Service promoters.

"And so you promise, Janie," said Judith, when a group of students had been greeted and escaped, "you promise this will be thrilling?"

"I haven't promised, but I'm afraid it will be," said Jane, tossing her head defiantly.

"And better sport than—the sports?"

"No sport in it."

"Well, there was our first year with you on the Subs," Judith undertook to recall, referring to the first year's record as told in Jane Allen of the Sub Team.

"All our years have been fruitful," went on Judith, "and I'll admit we have had our share of thrills, but I want this to be the banner, of course, and I feel sure that your handsome young man is the answer."

Jane swung an arm around her chum. She was always delicious, this dark eyed Judy, and after the recent separation of vacation Jane found her more attractive than ever.

In return Judith put two arms around Jane and almost lifted her bodily in a little affectionate jump. "You haven't got too heavy—I'm glad of that," said Judith. "I should hate to have to puff when I save you from some disaster out on a case. Do you suppose we will have to take special training in athletics? I can swing pretty well with my left," she did so. "But my right is a bit stiff," she tried that also. "I am sure we will have to be as limber as kittens and strong as 'cops' when we go gunning in your cases."

"Judith, do you realize, dear, you are joking at the expense of some of the dearest things in life——"

"Oh, your handsome young man, of course. He's exempt. I don't land either my right or my left on him. It's just for the other cases. That with the old maid aunt and that with the

tight-wad dad. Do you have any dad's on your list?"

"In family case work there may be entire families or pathetic remnants of that circle," said Jane, ignoring the bantering of Judith. "I just tingle with the prospect of investigating family wrongs and trying to correct them. Think, what an opportunity!"

Judith howled. Out in the street as she was, even the public opinion did not influence her mood. She was hilarious!

"I can see your—end," she said. "If you go to correcting family wrongs, I'd like to wager, you buy them all flivvers. Well, good luck! Show me the way and I'll help you tag them. Get the correct model car while you're about it."

And then they entered the office, thereby entering upon the most interesting period of their entire college course. There was more than a handsome young man of Judith's imagination in the work they were about to undertake, but fortunately for them, the profession does not forecast its detail—that is left for the field workers to unfold.

CHAPTER II

FIELD WORKERS IN THE MAKING

SEATED in the trim little office, waiting for the attention of the young girl who was answering the telephone, making notes and giving instructions to a young woman obviously her senior—and intermittently throwing out a sentence to a woman in black who sighed as she waited; in the face of this, Jane and Judith lost their frivolity and became, forthwith, seniors.

"I feel like backing out," Judith whispered.

Jane was too much interested to comment. She could not help hearing the telephone conversation, that is the half that was present on the office side of the wire; she could not but notice the sad face of the woman in the heathenish black garb that seemed to drip sadness, and she could not avoid approving the efficient way in which the young girl behind the desk took care of all the angles presented.

"I'll be with you girls, presently," remarked the young woman. "I have only to assign this case, then I will be—at your service." She

smiled pleasantly. The girls from Wellington were recognized as students whose interest it was important to obtain, and nothing but the pressure of actual business would have kept them thus waiting.

Presently all the business was disposed of. The woman in black tarried and did not seem inclined to go, but the senior worker kindly but firmly led the way out, and the "cortege" as it appeared to Jane, passed into the next corridor.

"We wish to take up your course," Jane began, directly after introducing Judith and being informed that the social service secretary was Miss Morgan.

"You have taken sociology at Wellington, of course?" she asked.

Jane reviewed her record in the subject, and Judith did likewise.

"We are most anxious to have workers, but——" she hesitated.

"What is the objection?" asked Jane frankly.

"Well, as a matter of fact, we rarely take such young girls. You see the work is not always pleasant, and for regular field work we usually require women of more maturity."

Jane's face fell. Being young was often a hindrance rather than a help.

"In our girl's club work we need your type, but you say you prefer the family case work?" inquired Miss Morgan.

"Oh, yes," said Jane. "Club work would not really appeal to us at all."

"College is full of clubs," chimed in Judith rather bluntly.

"I know that. I'm from Brownell," said Miss Morgan.

"Yet you are considered sufficiently experienced," Jane remarked smilingly.

"They needed some one for this office and I was pressed into service," explained the secretary. "Besides, I do not actually go out into the field, you see."

"But you must have done your two hundred hours field work," argued Jane.

Miss Morgan smiled, and it bore the brand of joyous youth, "I see I cannot win you to our girls club ranks," she said. "So I suppose I shall have to recruit you for the general course. We have some very interesting cases—when did you plan to commence?"

"Just as soon as you give us our assignments," said Jane. "We are all ready for the field, we have had any amount of theory."

Miss Morgan glanced down at her books. She looked up at Jane, then at Judith.

"I have one case——" Again she paused. It was evident this was important, and that while she wished to assign the girls to it, she almost feared to do so. She glanced again at Jane. "Which of you is the senior senior?" she asked, smiling at the term.

"Miss Allen has outclassed me—a little," said Judith, good naturedly.

"Now Judith," protested Jane. "We have kept together all through college, and I only happened to take up an extra subject last year," she told the secretary.

"But that extra was sociology," insisted Judith.

"To be frank, girls," continued Miss Morgan, "I will have to consult before I give this case out. Yet it is rather urgent. In the meantime I shall ask you to do some trial work. There are always too many cases waiting. And this locality, taking in the farms, means child-labor and children neglecting their education."

"Oh, I could inspect," said Judith brightly. "I had a class at our own country school once, and every time a boy stayed at home they sent me after him."

This brought forth a laugh from both Jane and the secretary. They could easily imagine Judith hauling a lad to school, even by the scuff of his collar, or is it the neck that has a scuff?

"I have a case waiting for you then," said Miss Morgan. "A boy of twelve, he is rather a lusty chap, will not go to school. We have no attendance officers here, and all that work comes to our bureau. I shall have the card made out for you at once, and, if convenient, you may start tomorrow."

"Now, Jane Allen!" said Judith. "I beat you after all. And my first case has a—boy in it." She wanted to say "handsome young man" but feared that would sound too frivolous.

Jane nodded agreement. Her case was not yet handed over, but she hoped when it was, it would not be a truancy.

It took some time to make out their application slips and sign all the confidential exchange matter, but being directly from Wellington their record and standing were sufficient to pass them through the preliminaries without much delay.

"If you will come in tomorrow, Miss Allen," said Miss Morgan, "I shall be ready to give you a case. As a matter of fact, we always give our instructions out confidentially. I know you are

very good friends, but Social Service is different from all other branches of study," she qualified. "It involves the most intimate affairs of families, and the most remarkable complications that often are responsible for need and neglect. So if you will report one at two, and the other at three tomorrow, I shall give you each a try out," she said checking a very broad smile to answer the impolite telephone.

Jane and Judith collected the literature they were to begin on and passed out to allow others to enter.

"Well!" gasped Judith, before they had left the business building. "Now I am in for it. Jane Allen, red head, also brick top and carrot stew! If I find this labor union and general family affairs are not consistent with the very best usages of society I shall sue you for damages in the highest court of the land. I just know I shall have a perfectly dreadful time. Have you considered that I am absent minded? Suppose I bring my truant lad right into Deanie's office by mistake? Or suppose, worse still, he robs us of our jools! Think, think girl! Of that string of red beads Dozia Dalton lives in. If aught should befall them Dozia would go daft——"

"Oh Judy, do be sensible. Aren't you thrilled

already? Don't you know you will get off from a lot of dry, dull lectures to go hunting up truant boys?"

"Do I go alone? Stark alone?" wailed Judith.

"No, my dear, you need have no anxiety on that score. The colleges do not allow their girls to go out alone on cases."

"So glad!" sighed Judith. "For, Janie dear, I was only bluffing about being a crack shot at bagging hookey lads. I would be scared to death if one so much as blew a putty ball at me. The cases I referred to were from a Sunday School class, and when I called I always went dressed up and in our car. It was that which impressed."

"I can understand," said Jane. "They liked the car ride to school in you flivver."

"Loved it. That's why I suggested flivvers as prizes for your cases. But Jane, honestly, I am all a-tremble. Can you imagine us going on real cases? Into strange places and all?"

"Why not? Aren't you old enough to know how to run a family?"

A shout answered this. It seemed every sentence the girls uttered was capable of a free and also a literal translation. One could scarcely imagine Judith Stearns "running a family."

"And we are to go separately for our cases,

remember that," said Judith. "There're a lot of the girls back from basketball. We have already missed something."

"But we have had the games through all our three years," Jane reminded her companion. They were almost at the college gate, and the girls were coming and going, laughing, calling, and whistling, as girls in their own world are ever wont to do. They hailed Jane and Judith, but the latter put on a most important air, and declared she was out on a "secret service case" and no one was to "intercept her."

In reply they seized Judith and carried her bodily into the grounds. Dozia Dalton, the biggest, strongest and best natured girl of all, just picked Judith up and marched along with her while the others followed, taunting gleefully.

Jane fell in step with Nettie Brocton. "Have you seen Bobbie and Sally?" asked Jane. "I promised to meet them this afternoon, but I couldn't make it."

"Yes, they were both at practice. Bob is coming along in great shape," attested Nettie. "But say Janie, what's all this I hear about you going outside and doing Social Service?"

"Exactly that," admitted Jane. Judith had managed to escape from Dozia and was now run-

ning wildly through the campus. No one would have taken her for a senior, that is, no one who did not know the joyous freedom of dear old Wellington.

"We all wish you wouldn't, Jane," said Nettie gently.

"Why?"

"It will take you away from everything here."

"Oh, no. Not so bad as that. Of course, I'll have to give up a lot of sports and I won't have as much time as usual for high jinks," said Jane. "But you see, Nett, I want a—career, a ka—ree—eer!"

"Oh, I see. Well, there is a big demand for the real thing in college girls. I know Social Service is taking graduates only, so, perhaps, Janie, just perhaps, you may bring glory to Wellington, although to be frank, I prefer the immediate results of a very good time."

"I am frail and human enough to feel the same way," admitted Jane, "but a still, small voice within me—etc. You know, Nettie, what it is when you inherit things, and I have a father who is never content with ordinary results. So, I suppose, my virtuous rash is breaking out in this, my senior year."

"But you don't mean to say you expect Judy

Stearns to make good at anything like that?" queried Nettie, incredulously.

"Yes, I do. The fact is, Judy is a perfect brick at keeping girls together, and that's the very requirement for the girl's club work. I do admit she would not seem fitted for the family case work; she would just sit down and commiserate with every toothache; but in girls' work, I think Judy ought to be perfectly splendid," Jane enthused. "Dont you remember how she patched up all the stirring factions we have suffered from in the last three years?"

"Yes, but she had *you* to work for, and you did happen to be popular. Not that I underestimate Judy," Nettie hurried to explain, "but I was just considering what might happen if this interest should spread. Why, half the girls will be running for Social Service work." Nettie's voice showed some opposition.

"Do you understand the principle, Nettie?" asked Jane, a challenge in her voice.

"Oh, yes. [You are supposed to investigate and adjust all sorts of family squabbles and troubles," said Nettie. "I knew a girl who took the Spencer course and she couldn't come home for meals. She always had her Christmas dinners down at the docks, and her especial interest was

with the men who mend umbrellas. Now Jane, can you see yourself at that sort of thing?" scoffed Nettie.

"I may begin on babies," answered Jane. They were almost at the door of Madison, and Judith ran back to meet them. She promptly interrupted.

"Oh, say Nett! Has she been telling you? About my handsome boy, I mean. The one I am to adopt?"

"I don't recall the handsome boy, I thought, rather, it was a flock of girls," replied Nettie, taking on Judith's good humor.

"Then she's prolonging the good news. Yes indeed! I am to go out gunning for hookey lads, and can you imagine it?"

"Now Judith, if you go around making fun of the work you are sure to get into a frivolous state of mind, and that will be psychologically against *good* work. You want to take this seriously or I am afraid you will not be successful. Get used to the word 'serious,' " insisted Jane.

"Serious? I am going to lock my door this very night and study these maps and charts," Judith waved the roll of pamphlets. "I will be letter perfect in every detail before I go back to that efficient little woman. And Jane, the

more I think of it, the more I am convinced, that the case she is going to hand over to you is the one of especial importance. I could tell by her eye——”

“Reading eyes all ready? That’s a pretty good start, for the first step in our new profession, ahem! is keen observation. There Judy, I knew you were a fit student. Now girls, just watch our——”

But Jane was too near a professor, who stood at the hall door, to finish in the vernacular.

CHAPTER III

THE HOPELESS CHEST

FROM this rather flighty beginning evolved the most important issue ever undertaken in Wellington. The interest in Social Service spread, just as Nettie Brocton foretold, until most of the seniors of any account whatever, either applied for admission to the class, took up the preparatory lectures, or devoted all their extra time and money to the "Cause."

"It's lots better than running around after the basketball squad," said Dozia. "Besides, girls, it will prepare us for our own family management." Dozia was irresistible as a prospective home-body.

"We thought as much, Dozia," said Jane. "You can now entertain the class with an account of the hope chest. What's the newest in hopes?"

"My newest," and Dozia gave her characteristic stretch that brought her length out perilously near Ted Guthrie's best pumps, "my new-

est in hopes is the Lost Hope. It's too sad to relate," and she sniffed effectively.

"Ah, now Doze! Go on and tell!" begged Janet Clark. "We have heard that you really are engaged."

"Some good friend spread the glad report," replied Dozia, "but unfortunately, it is spread on a very thin surface. I almost lost the man outright, this summer."

"How?"

Here was the very morsel of news everyone craved.

"Well, you know how I look in a bathing suit——"

"Perfectly mermaidly," said Jane. "With that grace and those locks, not to speak of the——"

"Shanks, say it Jane. Have courage! It was the shanks. You know I just insisted on wearing them covered, and not another girl, nay not even a matron, wore covered shanks this summer."

"What in the world would a pair of stockings have to do with a man?" asked Velma Sigsbee. She knew Dozia's jokes, yet would take her seriously in spite of that.

"Oh, heaps. But I scarcely feel able to relate," said Dozia. "It all comes back with a

swoop——” and she spread an inadequate hand, fanlike, over a smiling face.

“Go ahead, dear,” encouraged Ted Guthrie. She was as fat as ever, in spite of all her summer treatments. “Do tell about the shanks,” she begged.

“No, it was socks, wasn’t it Doze?” prompted Nettie.

They were all in Jane’s room, which was also Judith’s. Madison Hall, the home of some juniors and many seniors, had about settled down to the regular routine of girls and girls, with books and papers. The beds were there also, stuck away as far back as walls would allow, but the most conscious feature was the girls with their personal appurtenances, such as pillows, candy boxes, banners, pictures and a few of the needed chairs. Alongside of said chairs the students usually spread themselves out on the floor. The present evening was being given over to Dozia’s reminiscence of what she termed “A Lost Summer.”

“As you were saying,” again Judith suggested, “it was the socks.”

“Yes. You know how they will get hole—y, the very best of them. Not that mine had ever been good—Dud lent them to me and he never

would have done so if they had not been beyond repair—but I wore them, at any rate——”

“That’s the main thing,” interrupted Janet, with a sigh of relief.

“Yes, it was. And my friend—Phil——”

“*The* friend?” asked Jane.

“He—she or it, and sometimes W and Y.” Dozia rolled over and pulled down a bunch of papers that had been sliding from a chair. They flew about most recklessly and Judith made a pretense of scrambling after them.

“When you get back to position I shall proceed,” said Dozia, loftily.

“Oh, go ahead! What about your old socks?” demanded Nettie, impatiently.

“Shanks?” insisted Velma.

“Both,” amended Jane.

“Either,” flung in Judith. “I’m not so particular, Doze.”

“Now, maybe you-all think this is funny. Have you lost track of the fact that I lost my Phil through it all?” This with a whimsical inflection put Dozia in the forsaken class.

“No, I have that fact on my first finger,” said Jane. “But Doze, is he that perfectly spiffing fellow you brought out to the prom last year?”

“Yes.”

"And your hope chest is hopeless now?"

"I'm planning a auction or a fire sale," moaned Dozia.

"How did it happen?" demanded Velma. "Did he get angry because you did or did not wear socks?" Velma was distractingly literal.

A shout followed this. It soared and roared until Jane begged for consideration.

"You know, Walker has asked that we be orderly and let the other good students—stude," she explained.

"It was this way," again began Dozia. "I was learning a new stroke and it was perfectly dreadful on socks, so when I went in the water I loosed me garters——"

"Did you wear—them?" The scorn in Nettie's voice betrayed her own weakness for the rolled top sock, and her abhorrence for anything so antiquated as elastic.

"Oh, just the merest thread," Dozia explained. "You see, girls, I have not the self-adjusting sort of knee. Mine slides."

The long, thin girl, who was the biggest joke to herself, never looked longer than she did at the moment. Surely her knees did "slide."

"And Phil? Where does Phil figure?" demanded Winifred Ayres.

"When I came back from the briny deep my socks would not stay socked, and you know, girls, I never could go out on the beach with those little, pink shanks just shanking. So I asked Phil would he mind running over to the pavilion store for a box of cookies?"

"Cookies? I thought you wanted garters?" gasped Velma.

"I did, of course. The cookies were just an excuse to get rid of Phil; *they* would never hold up socks. Well, he went away and I crawled out and pulled the socks after me," she continued. "I was just about to try that new fangled roll, you know the cute little turn we used to make baby's hats out of old stockings with, when along came Jack Dean. I hadn't seen the boy in years, and I forgot all about the miscreant socks, and promptly came out to greet him. I was doing so most effusively, when along came Phil with the cookies."

"We don't quite see——"

"No one could," Jane interrupted the narrator.

"But men are the oddest sticks. There was Jack and there was Phil and there was I——" This was Dozia.

"And the cookies," suggested Velma.

"Ye-ah. Then I looked down at my poor, benighted knees and plunged into the deep again. My knees were never pretty," admitted Dozia.

"Just to cover a pair of knees? Left two very nice boys?" queried Judith. She had been eating candy up to that, but the boy part interested her.

"I did. Jack dove in after me, but Phil—he just turned on his heel and went up the sands, mad. Said I had cut him for Jack and he knew Jack at Blake's, and Jack had always been a tease, it seems. When I came back to the water's edge" (Dozia was dragging out the yarn with telling effect. Some of the girls were almost asleep), "when I came back," she repeated, "Phil was just assisting a striped suit girl into the canoe, although it was too rough to go on the ocean in a bark. But I suppose he did it so I could see that he did not depend upon one, mere girl. Then Jack fell to and took care of me."

"And the naked knees?" Velma was not to be sidetracked.

"I was so glad to see Jack I forgot about the knees. And besides lots of folks wore them that way," said the inconsistent Dozia. "But they did furnish the evidence. I have not been hope-chesting for Phil since."

"And what about Jack?" Velma again.

"I had a card for his wedding last week," admitted Dozia. "He is the sort of fellow who believes in settling down."

"I don't blame him," remarked Nettie. "Even you gave up Phil for him. He must be a regular—prize."

"Not exactly, but he has a position in the biggest export office on the docks. He will take the girl to foreign parts. But Phil, now he is different. He believes in home-rule, or home-trade, or whatever you call home grown stuff," floundered the weary Dozia.

"Couldn't you make it up?" asked Nettie.

"Girls, I will confide in you a real secret," said the girl who was holding the center of the stage. "I believe college is the death of real prospects. When I went home I expected to find the usual crowd of admirers on my door step, instead of which they were two doors down. Myrtle had *not* gone to college but had cultivated friends. I don't believe in being away from home four mortal years, and letting the others do all the campaigning."

"You don't claim that your sentiment is original, do you?" asked Jane. "Seems to me others have sent out that alarm."

"Many. That is all the more reason why it's

“true.” Dozia was apparently serious. “And Jane Allen, I suspect that is why *you* are out for Social Service. You are going to prove you can do something besides listen to lectures and attend proms. You are going to learn ‘family cases,’ I hear.”

“With a handsome young man thrown in the very first case,” inserted Judith. “While I must be content with a mere, truant boy.”

“There is something in what you say,” bantered Ted Guthrie. She looked like a great, big, extra cushion on the couch. “I was not besieged with callers myself this summer,” she admitted. “The boys, especially, seemed to shy clear of me. Claimed I was a high brow. Now girls, what shall we do to correct all this? We can’t all go into the family case work,” she concluded.

“For one thing we can carry extra elastic when we try new strokes,” suggested Dozia. “Who could foresee that so trifling a trifle would result so disastrously?” Again the falsetto wail.

The tale had been frivolous, still, it held the girls’ attention. When away at college, the home scenes, particularly the summer features, are always a welcome diversion. How much or how little of Dozia’s story was built upon fact no one bothered to question, as she was ever most ac-

commodating as an entertainer; but she was also one of the girls with social "prospects," and around her interest was found to center.

"Quite a yarn," commented Judith. "I had one myself but I'll save it for a better opportunity. Besides, who could compete with Dozia?"

"Gather up the fragments," suggested Jane, alluding to Dozia who was scattered about the floor. She was long enough to be "gathered up," and as she moved quite a number of articles moved with her.

"And honestly, Doze, aren't you going to tell us about the hope chest?" pressed the insatiable Velma.

"Say Vellie, why don't you get one? They're quite cheap now, or just ask the grocer boy for a pretty box and cover it all over with cretonne," suggested Jane. "Then, when you ask a boy to go for cookies and another one comes along the sands, why, you'll be all ready. I'll start you with a pair of worsted slippers Judy Stearns wished on me last birthday."

This precipitated a veritable shower, each girl offering the helpless Velma such gifts as had been thrust upon the original, until Velma, not to be outclassed in strategy, got a note book and therein recorded the promises.

"And I'll collect F.O.B.," said Velma. "I don't know what it means, but that's the way our winter apples come and they are always lovely."

"Just let me see your ring, Doze?" asked Jane, reverting to the Phil and Jack episode. "It seems to me, that's new."

"Oh, do let's!" begged a chorus. Whereupon Dozia and her diamond became a pivot around which circled the party.

Every one admired, and Dozia fondled the third finger of her left hand significantly.

Thus the beginning of the senior year found all the students preparing for the year after. As the first two, and sometimes three years at college are difficult, the senior year is regarded as a perfectly sure finish. So to these seniors came the new problem of the big, outside world. For the entire course they had all but given up home and its consequent responsibilities, but now they were coming back to it with a rush. Home would soon be theirs.

But to Jane the present was especially fascinating. A knowledge of the great, mysterious battle of life as being fought by the less fortunate, afforded her a new and profound interest. So strange, so wonderful, and even so remarkable

was the vista opening up through the study of Social Service that even Judith had calmed down at last to its tragic requirements.

The little cards, marked out in blocks for notes and reports, were now as familiar to the students as had been their test reports heretofore, and following the initial preparation their cases were assigned, and, as had been anticipated, it was Jane's case that made the real story.

She was allowed to talk over some of the detail with Judith in private conference, and she was now availing herself of this privilege.

"It frightens me," she admitted. "I really wonder, Judy, am I wise enough——"

"Oh, pooh bah!" exclaimed Judy. "You are not only wise enough but also brave enough. Miss Morgan told me so herself."

"That's kind," replied Jane. "But you have no idea how complicated this special case is."

"The one with the handsome young man attached?"

"Queer how you suspected him. There is really a young man in it. I haven't seen him, so I cannot testify as to his beauty," said Jane, jotting another line in her day's report book. "I am going out tomorrow to see one branch of the family and obtain my first interview."

"Could I know how the young man figures?" asked Judy, facetiously.

"He has not figured yet. Part of my task is to get him to do so."

"Oh, go on Janie. Tell a fellow something about it," coaxed Judith. "I told you all about my hookey case."

"If you will just try to be serious for a few minutes I should be glad to," replied Jane. "But Judy, we are really handling life problems in this work, and we cannot afford to treat it lightly."

"Oh, I know. I found my family trying to divide a can of salt codfish between four today, and that included the baby. I know just how serious it is," admitted Judith. "But Miss Morgan was so secretive about your case——"

"Yes, I rather think she was doubtful about turning it over to a beginner. But there was need for a girl to handle it. It seems the regular experienced workers had little influence upon the principal party, an elderly gentleman," Jane continued.

"Oh, I adore elderly gentlemen! Now, why couldn't I have had that case instead of my codfish shower?" deplored Judith.

"There appears to have been a reason," went

on Jane evenly. "Fact is, the old gentleman is a friend of dad's."

"Not really?"

"Yes indeed. He wrote dad something of the story and happened to mention that girls from Wellington were 'pestering' him. Dad wrote back that I might be among the number of pests."

"Good for dad! I like his spirit. I wish my folks would go into the produce business and send me a shipment of fresh fruit for my Andy and his folks. I fancy I could get him to attend school more promptly if he did not have to worry about purloining specked bananas," complained Judy.

"Yes. It seems strange that there should be actual want so near us out here; but this is an old town, and the outskirts have been gradually fading from the state of prosperous farms to that of being the fringe of a college town. Industries have come, but the most important, that of soil cultivation, has departed," Jane deplored.

"My, but you have learned! All that in a few weeks? I never hope to compete with such efficiency. Did your family own a farm and lose it?" asked Judith.

"No. I hardly know how to begin on relating even the preliminary detail, but I can tell you

this much. There is a young woman, and an elderly woman, two small children, and outstanding and most important, a very wealthy uncle," said Jane.

"Oh, I see. He's dad's friend, naturally. Your dad couldn't have any other sort of friends," Judith made a note or two herself.

"Judy Stearns! Don't you dare insinuate my father isn't popular among the humblest! I believe this rich friend made himself that way, and he was father's friend when both were struggling." Jane's voice, while partly bantering, was a trifle emphatic.

"Oh, no harm meant, Jane," Judith hurried to say. "I just naturally knew that the rich uncle would be your dad's friend. But I don't blame you at all for resenting the inference." Judith was serious now. "It is a handicap even here to be considered as belonging to the idle rich. Not that I would mind it——"

"If we are going to consult, Judy, hadn't we better be going at it? I have to report to Miss Morgan early tomorrow, and I really don't feel as if I had made any progress. I haven't even seen the young woman."

"What's the outstanding difficulty?" asked Judith bluntly.

"It's mysterious. The mother's health is broken through anxiety. The daughter is a young widow, and the son—he's at college!"

"Just like a boy! To be out of it all. Hale him back and set him to work; that's my diagnosis," said Judith promptly.

"But there's a reason," demurred Jane. "How would you like to have a brother yanked out of college in his last year after having made all sorts of sacrifices to get him that far? It appears he is a most estimable young man, and has a position waiting for him as soon as he graduates. His college specializes in engineering, and he may build big bridges, and amount to something. Would you deprive a boy of that after he had worked so hard for it?" demanded Jane.

Judith dropped her pencil and focused her dark eyes on the flushed girl before her.

"Say Jane," she said very gently, "I just wish I had one brother, only one; I'd give him to you," she finished, and there was no bantering note in her soft, even voice.

CHAPTER IV

TOO YOUNG TO QUALIFY

VELMA'S shower brought forth a party. It was held in Ted Gutherie's room because she had one all to herself, and she was always good natured about parties. Besides these considerations, there was that of hot chocolate, which Ted collected in thermos bottles. No heating affairs were allowed in use in Madison, but there was no objection to fetching hot things in.

Dozia was in a state of alleged huff. She protested that the signs hung upon her door the night after her lost garter story, did not add credit to her reputation as a girl of sterling disposition.

"That one 'Fire Sale,' brought the babies in," she declared, "and the one Judy made, I knew her art, 'Auction of Sentimental Curios,' that went right to our Lit. Prof.'s heart. She wanted to know what I had——"

"Now Dozia," interrupted Nettie, "we all

know you are going to be the first married, and we are getting our bridesmaid's outfits ready between times. In fact, we are all wondering why you stay the year out. Suppose Phil should meet another girl in a striped suit?"

"It is risky," admitted the tall girl. "But my dad had his dear, old heart set on a grad in the family, and *I* must be that. We have none other to qualify. But isn't it lovely about Velma? The Hope Chest may keep her out of mischief for a time, at least. She has the most tantalizing way of—sticking to things."

"How do you like domestic science?" asked Nettie pointedly. "I think it's too funny; Jane and Judy in for family affairs and you in for the cooking class."

"Funny! What do *you* intend to do when you go home? Going to give lectures on Socrates? It seems to me, Nettie, it would be a good idea for you to take up something practical yourself. I heard the blacksmith say, the other day, he wished he had an apprentice."

"Now Dozia Dalton! Don't get sarcastic! I *did* ride in a side car a few times, but I am not interested in the art of wheelwrighting. It seems to me I have more than my share of extra work to do, with getting up proms and such features

since you and Jane ducked," she continued. "It is all well enough for the uplift idea, but who is going to carry on in Wellington?"

"The freshies all love you. Isn't that worth while? I believe the term is 'crush'—they all have 'crushes' on you. I don't like the word. Makes me think of what money I lost at a soda fountain last year; but in the dorms of the babes the name Nettie Brocton fairly echoes," declared Dozia, dramatically. "So don't you worry about others deserting the social ranks."

"Jane and Jude are simply lost to us," Nettie continued to bewail. "Bobbie and Shirley are inconsolable. Jane took them to her heart last year, you know, and I can't see how she is going to desert them now. They sort of look to her to fight their battles."

"Well, Jane is fighting real battles and Judith is having a great time collecting truant boys, I believe," said Dozia. "As far as I am concerned I haven't done a thing outside except to help with the Health Drive. I hope I did a mite of good then by spreading the gospel of soap and water in the southern district. Poor creatures! They are so busy trying to live they don't have time to learn *how* to live."

"Miss Rutledge was proud of our corps,"

added Nettie. "She said we made a better showing than any of the other colleges. And it was not a simple matter to go into the big city, and canvass for clean faces. I was with Miss Wilcox, up town, and it was not so bad there. But I heard about your district."

"I don't blame Jane and Judith for going into the whole thing scientifically," added Dozia. "I found the only answer to the perpetual question of 'what can be done' is to be found in the text books. It cannot be guessed at, and it is almost an exact science."

"Yes, I agree with you," said Nettie. "I used to think it was a matter of boosting salaries, but I know now we have to have the specialist in the human nature field, as well as in any other particular branch of applied knowledge. But it seems to me, Jane is taking her work over seriously. She wouldn't even accept a senior office, and after the place she held here last year," commented Nettie.

"Just give Jane her head, as we say in sports, and she will come back to us triumphant," declared Dozia. "You know very well, Nettie, a lot of the girls criticised our devotion to Jane, said we were unfair."

"Oh, they would criticise our attention to

Columbia, if she happened along," complained Nettie. "I don't mind giving others a chance, but I don't care to have so much to do myself. Not one of the crowd of dissenters is willing to send out tickets, help with decorating, or do any of the hundred things we have to do for the first prom. They were eager enough to go on committees, but once their names appeared in the Tellit they just sat back, and I have to gather up all the loose ends," she declared.

"I'll help, Nett, honestly I will," declared Dozia. "I did not realize how we were missed. Of course, the seniors owe a lot of social obligations to the others, and I'll see Jane and Judith and ask them to change their schedule and make room for a few evenings at home. I'll call upon them this very night," she finished, firmly.

"I breathe easier," sighed Nettie. "I have been so used to the party as a whole I cannot sense it in terms of persons. I wonder how the big work is really coming on?"

"They're so secretive about it they won't even tell me what the field work means—beyond 'cases,' as if that meant anything. But I saw Judith with a lad yesterday, and I did not have to be a Sherlock to guess she was hauling him to the office. She was talking so fast she never

saw me as I turned the corner. I was riding with Winifred Ayres. We were out scouting for banners for the field day. We must wind up the season gaily."

"How the autumn has flown?" remarked Nettie. "Well, let me know what the girls say, and see if you cannot recall them to home service. It seems to me they should remember the Sororities."

"Oh, they will. Jane and Jude never desert," declared Dozia. "It is only a question of adjusting their schedule. I believe all the field work has to be covered within a certain time." She was on her way to the letter box, and it was an open secret that Dozia Dalton made more trips to that box than any other senior except Mary Wallace, who wrote poetry.

It was twilight, and knots of girls were hurrying about, trying to crowd into the late daylight a full day's programme of sports.

But down at the far end of the campus, in that part of the college grounds rarely frequented by students, Jane Allen was making her way from hedge to path and back, crouching in whatever shadows offered her protection.

"Isn't it lovely out here?" she was cooing to the child she held so closely.

"It's dark," faltered the youngster.

"But Joy isn't afraid, are you, Joy?"

"Me is." This from Joy.

"Where's Grandma?" piped Jill. She was the older of the two pathetically young students—if all newcomers were to be considered students at Wellington.

"Grandma is sick, you know," soothed Jane. "And you are going to stay all night in this lovely big house. Won't that be nice?"

"I's afwaid!" sobbed Joy, belying her name. "I wants to go back."

At this Jane found it advisable to sit down in a particularly convenient spot, and talk more seriously. She could not let the students see her with her strange charges, but she must smuggle them into Madison, somehow. Once there she would depend upon Judith to help her put over the night. It was a most heroic undertaking but she had no choice, so it seemed to her, at least.

So there in the privacy of the kindly old hedge, Jane Allen tried to inveigle two rebel children into admiration for a group of formidable looking buildings, from which the youngsters instinctively shrank.

"See all those girls——" she was pointing out.

"Where's mama?" asked Jill, choking back a sob.

Jane put an arm around the darling child. She was so pretty, with such eyes, and such a hungry heart-look.

"Mother will be back tomorrow. You know Grandma said she had to go——"

"But she is so long," argued Jill, gulping audibly.

"Dram'ma's sick," interrupted Joy. "Dram'ma cry and cry——" She was trying on Jane's hat and did not keep to her subject very closely.

"Will we have—supper soon?" asked the mature Jill, poking her head out to look at the nearest building.

"Oh, yes," Jane was glad of the recommendation. "As soon as we go up into the big house we will have supper," she assured them both.

"Then, why don't we go?" persisted Jill.

Jane glanced along the path. "Come on. We may go out now. We were just waiting——" She did not say "for the other students to leave the paths," but Jane knew better than to risk encountering a multitude, with those two precious children, one on each side of her. Now she left the hedge cave with a child clinging to each hand,

and dodged along as quickly and as safely as opportunity allowed.

At the door she waited again. The girls were hurrying in to dinner, and only a few stragglers impeded Jane's direct passage into Madison. The two little ones shuffled along, quite as if they had been generally accustomed to acting without understanding why. Only Joy dragged heavily on her protector's skirts; but the tiny tot was tired and even her good will did not insure speeding up those big, stone steps.

Once within the hall Jane breathed more freely. She paused and reassured the little strangers.

Jill was exclaiming. "Oh, how love-el-lee!" Her small hands clasped and unclasped in admiration. "See that great, big, white lady-statue!"

"Yes, that's our big queen lady," Jane bent down to whisper. "She is the mother of this great, big school."

Back of the marble statue of "Henrietta," Jane sought refuge. A belated student was hurrying breathless to the dining room, but she passed without observing the new group of human statuary.

"I smell some'fin," sniffed little Joy. "Tan we eat it?"

"Keep close to Janie and we will soon have something to eat," promised the excited senior. It was one thing to stand sponsor for the youngest babes that, possibly, ever entered Wellington, but quite another thing to bring them to table or bring table to them. But important as that issue was, Jane felt her first task should be to get the children safely ensconced in room number nineteen. There she would depend upon Judy to assist with the secrecy. At any rate, she must get the babes up that one flight of stairs now.

"Come along quickly," she urged. "I'll carry you, little Joy," she decided, and put an arm under the slumping figure, while a pair of eager arms almost choked her. Joy was so glad for a "lift." The stairs mounted, Jane hurried to the room numbered nineteen. At the door she tapped and Joy gave a little kick, Judy swung it open.

"Jane Allen," gasped Judy.

"Hush! Judy, don't say a word! Let us in, please," begged Jane, while Jill slipped in under Jane's arms and Judy's astounded gaze.

"What is it?" demanded Judy. "Have you raided an orphanage?"

"Oh, Judy! I am almost dead!" gasped Jane. "I have had to fairly crawl——"

"We's terrible hungry," piped up Jill. "Can we eat very soon?"

"The darlings!" exclaimed Judith, dropping down to put an arm around each. "Aren't they adorable?"

"Yes, but I'm afraid they're starved," exclaimed Jane. "Judy, how can we get them some food?"

"Oh Jane, where did you get them?" Judith ignored Jane's question, looking first at one and then at the other little stranger. They were, as she said, adorable, but they were also, as Jane said, hungry.

Little Joy's lip began to tremble. "I want Dram'ma," she uttered, each syllable demanding an entire intake of her meager breath.

"You told Janie you would be—good, Joy-we," said the wise, little Jill, who, while obviously older than Joy, seemed younger than anyone else on earth, as viewed by Judith Stearns.

Jane had dropped into a chair but Judith had not released the youngsters who stood beside her, dazed.

"Just you wait and see what we will have to eat in one single minute," Judith promised. "There's Cousin Janie and this is Cousin Judy."

"Judy!" exclaimed Jill. "Oh! that's fun! Where's the other one?"

"Which other one?" asked Jane, glad of a distracting thought for the youngsters.

"The one that squeaks loudest," exclaimed Jill, clapping expectant hands.

"I don't know," faltered Jane puzzled.

"I do," sang out Judith. "She means Punch. This is a Punch and Judy show, isn't it Jill?" She squealed the tiniest, mouselike squeak.

"I dess so," she sighed. "I'm tired like Joy-we, too," and she plumped down on the floor, contentedly.

"Let me take your cap off and your sweater," said Judith energetically. She had not been through the exhausting experience Jane was suffering from. "Then we shall have a lovely party. Just you wait——"

She was peeling off the blue sweater that encased Joy, while Jill ripped up the two buttons that held her in her own, then continued to rip until she held the little garment in her small hands. If she were timid, indications were being politely withheld; only the big, blue eyes roving around the strange room suggesting the child's possible uneasiness.

"We will have to get food up here," Jane said

in an undertone. "Of course, you know, Jude, I had no idea of fetching them here."

A sidelong glance from Judith answered Jane. She knew whatever the explanation would be, there was not the slightest doubt of it's being satisfactory as far as Judy was concerned. The situation was simply thrilling. Two babes with but a single thought—something to eat!

"You stay with them and I'll forage," offered Judith. "In the mean time let them play with anything—there's part of a box of fudge Doze sent. She is coming in after supper." This voiced apprehension.

"She must not," Jane exclaimed. "Oh, Judy I am almost——"

"You are not, Jane. This is simply—delightful. We will lock every one out and take care of the kiddies. I only hope your schedule includes a night here. I am just dying to put a baby to bed."

Thus she effectively banished Jane's immediate anxiety. But there was plainly trouble ahead.

CHAPTER V

A NOVEL NURSERY

A FEW minutes later Judith returned to the room, her arms embracing bundles that mounted up, tower-like toward her chin.

"Here we are!" she announced needlessly. "Now Janie, you spread the table, and maybe Joy would like to sit up on that big cushion."

"I like it," announced Joy, scampering up on Jane's autographed pillow cover, done in the college colors of favored boys.

"And can I sit over here," piped Jill, decorously. She was on the arm of a chair that brought her up in line with the mission table, just being spread.

Jane laid out the paper napkins and soon the tiny visitors had a splendid chance to betray their home training, which they did—beautifully.

Joy wanted to stick her pudgy fingers in the

gooey cake, but no one could blame her, for only two spoons were available, and "waiting turn" was slower than the usual way supper is served, especially to tiny tots.

"How did you manage all this?" Jane asked presently. She was joyous in the task of distributing the bounty, and for the time being her face shifted its shadows.

"I went right into the kitchen and there was our friend Laura—she with the ashen coronet of braids," Judith explained. "She loves to bestow, and she kept piling things on me until I thought I should have to call in the express man. How is it all?"

"Wonderful, but not exactly a balanced diet," said Jane, trying to hide a cream cake that Jill was spearing at with a paper cutter. "We shall have to be careful not to have sick babies on our hands——"

"Sick! Drand'ma's sick," spoke up tiny Joy, slipping down from her initialed cushion and making for the door.

"Oh, no, dear. You stay here with big sisters," coaxed Jane, a detaining hand laid gently upon the little tousled head. "I have a lovely dollie——"

"Joy-we's dollie?"

"Yes," spoke up the sister who was still after the cream cake. "You wait, Joy-we, and we will give you another Chubby."

"Where?" Joy was the soul of brevity if not of wit.

"Here!" announced Jane, exhibiting a real kewpie in a bright red kimona—Dozia's idea of a whist prize.

"Oh 'es, oh 'es!" said Joy, laying hold of the prize, eagerly.

What was to be done when the supper was over even Jane could not foresee. She knew the little ones should go to bed, but how?

While Jill continued to eat and Joy devoted herself to Dozia's prize, the seniors practically held their respective breaths.

Judith broke the spell. "Can't you give me a hint?" she asked. "I have been patient, Jane, but I am not absolutely free from curiosity. Where—did—you get them?"

"My case," whispered Jane. "And I am so anxious. I think I ought to 'phone. Their grandmother was taken suddenly ill." This was all she had an opportunity to say, for Joy undressed the kewpie and was putting it to bed in the china dish Laura had so magnanimously loaned the party.

"Baff tub," said Joy. "Me wash dolly," and before anyone could intervene she had spilled the only and last cup of tea over the helpless kewpie. Judith wanted it but Jane needed it, now neither cared for it, as it ran a bright, red stream all over the china dish, and a generous splash slopped out on the dark wood, and made a puddle on their best table.

"Judy, you can go down to the dining room now and have your dinner," suggested Jane. "I can get along all right and I couldn't eat a morsel myself."

"I don't believe I could either," said Judith, considerately. "And it seems to me each of your friends needs a special nurse, so I'll stay on the case. All that is worrying me is, what we will do when the girls call. They will simply go mad over them. Aren't they adorable?"

It was time beyond count that Judith had asked that very same question, and to each Jane had made the self-same answer.

They were the "darlingest children." Joy, the baby, had thick, brown curls that perfectly corkscrewed all over her head; her eyes were big and brown and she had dimples. Jill, the elder, was a blonde with bobbed, straight hair that always looks so artistic if it looks well at all. Her's

did, and her eyes were like violets, and then, of course, they were both beautiful in the very act of being children. What child is not?

Each wore little rompers under the sweaters that served as their travelling coats, and the rompers must have been one pink and the other blue, some time ago.

"They are — so well — tended," remarked Judith inadequately. She might have said something more definite but Jane understood.

"You should see—their——" (she whispered the word) "grandmother."

Joy was on the floor between a brace of cushions but she must have heard or had recollections, for she immediately yelled:

"I ywant my Drand'ma. I ywant her!" and there followed unmistakably a cry—a very babyish and promising cry. It was in the cleff that runs up and down and takes in all the minors and other notes of distress.

"There! There!" soothed Jane, snatching up the little rebel. "Don't cry, darling. Janie will sing for you——"

"Don't want sing. Don't want Jay-nee!" and the notes rose to flood tide.

Judith was dumfounded. Such a catastrophe had never occurred to her.

"What should we—do, Jill?" she besought the sister.

"She's sleepily," explained the knowing older sister, indifferently.

"Let me rock her," begged Judith. "Everyone will be in——"

"I can rock her," insisted Jane, rather breathlessly, swinging the baby dangerously near china cups on the corner shelf, then detouring into a bookcase.

"You'll kill yourself that way," objected Judith. "Should we rock her, Jill?" It took real shouts to get this across, over the top of Joy's crying.

"No. She must go to bed in the dark. She has to," insisted the dictator, scarcely turning from her own chosen task of gathering up cake crumbs.

The students did not need to exchange glances to exchange opinions. The air was rife with queries and emphatic answers.

"Let me take her," begged Judith; and being all but breathless Jane handed over the wriggling youngster.

"Heavy!" she sighed, in relinquishing the burden. "Judy, if we must rock her we ought to make a hammock out of something," Jane suggested.

A lull. Joy furnished intermission. She had actually subsided.

"We must undress her," said Jane anxiously. "I am sure she cannot sleep in those tight rompers. See what a good little girl Jill is," with a grateful look at the child who was still nibbling. Won't Joy-we let big sister put a pretty nightie on?"

But Joy-we was not keen on anything, nighties included. She was cuddling up in Judith's arm like the little lamb they had always expected her to be.

"Sh-s-s-sh!" warned the successful nurse, proudly. "She's almost asleep."

"But we must undress her," insisted Jane, the Social Service student in action.

"And fix her up in your blue-bird pajamas?" Judith managed to say. She lowered her knees as carefully as if they were made of wet sand and bound to crack; then across the slender lap of blue satin, beaded in red and white, she smoothed out Joy's doll-like form.

"How perfectly adorable!" It was Jane who said it this time and Judith who simply nodded her head.

Little Jill crept up to Jane's elbow. Because Joy was smaller this little one seemed older than

she really was. Both were babies, only saved from being twins by a year or so.

"I'm sleepy—like Joy-we," Jill said timidly. "Can we stay all night?" She glanced furtively at the inviting couch.

"Do you want to, Jill?" asked Jane, slipping an affectionate arm around the small shoulders. It was so satisfying to thus mother human dolls.

"It's nicer here and I don't like Carol," ventured Jill, replying.

Jane lifted the child and held her close. "You shall—not go back to—Carol," she whispered. "Carol does not know how to—to love babies, I'm afraid."

"She's cross," said Jill. "And Grandma—is sorry when she comes."

"Who is—Carol?" Judith managed to whisper over Joy's form. She was taking off the small shoes and smaller socks, in that fashion amateurs have, fearful lest a raised toe might precipitate more crying. The little form was stretched so contentedly out on Judith's lap that even Jane betrayed admiration for the picture.

"Carol," answered Jane, "is some friend of Mrs. Jennings." There was a look of explanation thrown in. "And I believe Mrs. Jennings"

mother dislikes the influence." It was a guarded statement but Jill was all eyes and ears, turning her head first to Jane, then to Judith.

"Oh," said Judith. "Does she live near them?"

"No. But she visits—often." Jane now had Jill's rompers off and was starting on the shoes. "What shall we put them to sleep in?" she asked presently. "I have been so anxious to get the baby quiet I almost forgot they must be robed in something. I think our pajama waists will be about the most useful, don't you?"

"Yes, but say, Jane. Isn't it a mercy the girls didn't hear the yelling? They must have had a pretty good dinner."

Just then Joy sighed so sweetly Judith put her ear down close, so as not to miss the most perfect of all music—a baby's sigh! The little chubby hand brushed away an unconscious shadow from the dimply face, and then a fat little leg was drawn up so suddenly it bumped right into Judith's smile.

"The darling!" whispered the potential mother. "No wonder you wanted to go in for this sort of thing, Jane. It's wonderful."

"If it did not carry so much responsibility," remarked Jane, her gray eyes blinking. "You

see, Judy, Mrs. Castbolt, that's the grandmother, is a splendid woman, and the daughter—well, I judge she is overdone with worry, and not quite fit for it. Her husband died in the Canal Zone last spring. I can't tell you much about it now, but this Carol is sort of an evil influence. Wants Mrs. Jennings to go in for the stage, or movies, or some other foolish thing. Now Jill," (this was said in a voice tones louder than was the sentence directed to Judith), "shall we get into a great, big, funny nightie? Not asleep! Oh, there, open the eyes," Jill was getting heavier momentarily. "We will be in a comfortable bed soon," Jane assured her, trying to prolong consciousness.

Judith digressed. "This is lovely," she said, "but it makes me think of the day the doctor went out and left me holding a violet ray tube, and I couldn't call for help, and I couldn't lay it down. How ever am I going to lay this little ray down without striking contact?"

"I'll slip Jill over on the couch and get the beds ready," proposed Jane. "But there's a step. It's at our door!" she gasped.

A tap, and the door was opened. It was Dozia.

She stood, speechless. Then she caught the

wireless signs, one from the tips of Judith's fingers to her lips, and the other in a wave of Jane's free hand.

"Kidnapers!" she whispered, stepping in and closing the door noiselessly.

"Doze, you are just in time," said Jane in so even a voice it did not even ripple the air. "Come over here—and make a place for—my baby."

Dozia did as directed. The couch cover was turned back and Jill was laid, gingerly, in the clearance. How expertly they worked?

"Now, help us make a place for Judy's baby," directed Jane. "We were helpless. Did not dare disturb them. Just like having a live wire on our hands." Whispers are unsatisfactory when reproduced in commonplace print.

Dozia was moving around in a dazed sort of way. She had too much confidence in both girls to question the astonishing situation. Another step in the hall sent her flying to the door.

"Put out a sick headache sign," begged Judith. She was leaning over little Joy and absorbing another of those angelic sighs.

Dozia scratched a sign and waited until the passerby had passed by, then she stepped out and pinned up the warning.

"Find the pajamas," ordered Jane. "We have got to get them out of these little shirts. I suppose they should have been bathed."

"Not mine," objected Judy. "She's a real little sport, and can yell better than the cheering squad. I'll be satisfied with leaving the shirt on, and putting a waist over it. Shall we cut off the sleeves?"

Dozia understood the necessity. "Couldn't we borrow anything better? Those waists will swallow them," she predicted.

"But they must serve as an entire outfit," Jane reminded the nurses. "And we had best not prolong the act. I'm as nervous as if I stole them."

"Where did you get them?" asked Dozia, slipping up to Jane's shoulder. The conversation was being carried on in the gentlest of undertones.

"Our case," Jane answered, venturing to lift one of Joy's arms and aim the hand toward Judy's big, crepe pajama sleeve. It was inserted successfully, and she then tried the same feat with the other hand and that act also was achieved. All that remained for her to do now was to slip the entire waist down under the sleeping child. The size of the garment compared with the needs of the wearer, made it an easy task

to get the sleeves on, but the rest would not be so easy.

"Let me lift her," suggested Doze.

The request was granted. But as Joy felt herself being lifted she subconsciously put two warm arms about Dozia's neck, and the waist went over Dozia's head!

"Mumsey!" murmured the child, drawing down closer the radiant face that bent over her. She did not open her own weary eyes.

"Lovey!" said Dozia, trying to free herself from the improvised "nightie" without waking the child. "Just wait 'till we fix it——"

Jane deftly threw the waist over Joy's head now, and while Dozia returned the affectionate squeeze still being bestowed upon her willing neck, the task was completed and Joy finally had a night garment on.

The three students fell back simultaneously.

"And thousands are dressed and undressed daily," sighed Judith.

"By thousands of mere, mortal mothers," whispered Jane.

"That's what the whole, wide world has been raving about since creation," Dozia said, in the surest of low voices.

"Wonderful!" breathed Judith.

But the worst was yet to come.

CHAPTER VI

AN OFFICER OF THE LAW

IT was a new experience, decidedly. Whether any one of the three girls had ever been in close, personal contact with a real, live baby before or not, was not known, but certainly each did her best to apply the world old art of maternal love to the little strangers.

"Just see her!" whispered Dozia, referring to Joy who lay in Judith's bed, with that natural right of inheritance peculiar to babes and other pets. Her head came out of the pajama waist and her feet came out from the coverlets, in a fashion defiant to the real intentions of both.

"Cuddles!" breathed Jane, leaning fondly over Jill who seemed assigned as her special charge.

"I can't understand how you got them here," pressed Judith.

"I can hardly myself. But girls, I am not sure I am safe from criticism in doing so. We were told explicitly, never to take a child in, even

for a night's refuge, without first notifying the police," Jane said.

"And have them take these darlings to a horrid station?" exclaimed Dozia. "What sense is there in that?"

"It makes a record," replied Jane, "and thus far most of my work has been towards that end—records. Of course I shall let Miss Morgan know, as early as her office is open in the morning. That was my trouble. I took the tots to her office and it was closed. Then I conceived the idea of setting them up here for the night," she explained.

"And a good thing you did," commented Dozia. She was still spellbound over Joy's toes. The head of the couch might make a dangerous whispering place, so the foot was chosen.

"What about this Carol?" queried Judith. She was fondly smoothing out Joy's little rumpled rompers.

"I am not exactly afraid of her," replied Jane, "but I could easily suspect her of making trouble. She seems set against anything named Service, Social or just plain."

"I know the type," declared Dozia. "They call anything that *they* do not do themselves, an interference. What *they* do is purely a personal

kindness, of course. But who and what is she, Jane?"

"A young woman with faded hair and abused complexion. She has been at Mrs. Castbolt's every time I went there. I never have been able to get a satisfactory interview on that account," Jane complained.

"Where is the children's mother?" asked Judith.

"She went off suddenly in search of a position. She had to go hurriedly, I believe, as a letter came requiring immediate answer in person. Her mother, Mrs. Castbolt, is always able to take care of the babies, but today she was taken with a sudden, sharp attack of something, and I saw she would need medical attention. I called the Red Cross car and sent her to the sanitarium. It is all we have in the way of a public hospital, out this way."

"And you girls have had no dinner?" exclaimed Dozia, suddenly realizing that fact. "Now, run down and beg from Laura. She's as good as gold to the starving. Run along, do," as Jane shook her head. "What sort of showing would you make on the morrow if you are headachy?"

"Come on, Jane," coaxed Judith. "I hoped

for that cup of tea our youngest bathed the kewpie in—before the bathing. Now I need two cups.”

Jane was glancing furtively at the sleeping babies. “I wonder if I did right? As I see them here so cozy and—so hidden away, I am sort of scary” she admitted.

“You scary!” scoffed Dozia. “Getting nerves in with your new course. Run and eat. You are getting starvation, that’s what ails you. I will do police duty, and woe be unto intruders!” threatened the redoubtable Dozia.

Upon the two girls insistence Jane finally consented. Dozia looked the regular night nurse as they left her, sitting there in the dim light, on Jane’s lowest chair, and between the two bed couches. Glancing back as they left the room, Jane and Judith smiled approval.

It is not important to state that the late diners were accorded generous treatment at the hands of the humane Laura, but the strength and confidence so surely a part of the well-fed creature, were needed conditions later that night, when things happened, and to that necessity Laura contributed in supplying the belated meal.

“My headache is gone,” declared Jane in grateful acknowledgment.

"I feel refreshed as—a baby," said Judith, smiling broadly at the free use of the newly acquired term.

"And if they want early breakfast," cautioned Laura, "just run down to me. Or shall I fetch it up—a small bottle of milk? I'd love to see the darlings," she added, plaintively.

"It would be lovely of you to do that, Laura," said Jane, realizing what a glass of milk might mean if procured early. "And, of course, we want you to see the children. You know we had to be so quiet about it——" JOE.

"Oh, I understand," said Laura with a smile that now, somehow, included the juvenile department. Strange how every one understood conditions where helpless infancy was concerned!

An hour later Dozia was banished and the two Social Service students were curled up in the two spots where room to curl was afforded them. All sorts of suggestions had been made and discarded. The babies would not be put to sleep in big chairs, or even in improvised hammocks, although Dozia declared she had seen it done in autos and upon trains; yet Jane and Judith declined to take their beds. They insisted upon keeping outpost duty; rugs, cushions, coverlets and even a couple of sweaters to boot.

The children slept well—that was the first happy consideration, and the students slept equally well, when they found the opportunity; that was an added blessing; and for an indefinable period of time there was nothing to complain of. Then a commotion broke in upon the nocturnal tranquillity. It was someone pounding at the door!

“Miss Allen!” came a voice. “Wake up! It is I, Miss Walker!”

Jane was awake. So was Judith, but it took a moment or two for either or both to realize it.

“All right,” replied Jane, raising her head with a bump on the chair leg. She was so coiled up she seemed under more than one chair, but of course that could not have been.

“What’s the matter?” asked Judith. She felt the subconscious tug of apprehension at her sleepy senses. Then she realized the babies were with them. That was it.

“Open the door,” came the summons.

Skillfully Jane extricated herself, and reached the door. On her way there she pulled up the night light.

“Oh, my dear young ladies!” exclaimed Miss Walker, flashing her hand light unintentionally into Judy’s blinking eyes. “I am so alarmed!”

"What is it? Why?" asked Jane.

"There is an officer down in the hall—an officer!" The words seemed to presage disaster unspeakable.

"About the—children?" gasped Jane.

"Yes, about *children*! What do you know about them, Miss Allen?" There was dread and terror in Miss Walker's voice.

"Why, I have two little ones here for the night——"

"Here?"

"Yes, why not? Isn't this my room?" spoke Jane, although she knew perfectly well it was not at all a question of room.

"But the babies? How could you bring them in here?" gasped the house mother.

"They needed shelter," said Jane simply. She refused to quake openly, although her knees trembled secretly.

"This officer—demands—the children," said Miss Walker. "Where are they?" She looked at the couches and knew the tiny forms outlined there were those of children, but obviously felt the necessity of asking all her list of questions.

"He shall not take them," declared Jane not too gently. "Where is he?"

"You cannot go down—Miss Allen——"

"Of course, I shall. I suppose, Miss Walker, you know that my Social Service work is recognized officially. I guess I can dispose of this gentleman's demands." Jane was getting into clothes and Judith was following her example.

"Why cannot you tell me—I shall give him your reply?" urged the prudent woman.

"Oh, thank you, Miss Walker," replied Jane, calm now and aggressive. "I think I had better see him myself. I shall be ready directly."

The house mother stepped in and peeked at Joy. She smiled. Her hand flash light had not been turned off and it showed up that smile beautifully. The magic of babes!

Little Jill turned over and murmured something like a whispering call. Judith was beside her instantly.

"Sh-s-s-sh!" warned Judith. "We must not wake them!"

"Oh, no, don't," begged Miss Walker. "If you insist upon going down, Miss Allen, I shall go along and wait for you. Please hurry."

Jane was hurrying. In a very few minutes she was down in the first hall and answering the officer's questions.

"You know, miss," he said kindly, "no one can take a child into their home."

"Yes, I do know that, officer," said Jane, equally kindly, "but these children had to go somewhere, and the office of our Social Service director was closed. I could not take them back and keep them in that deserted house."

"You could not," agreed the officer, "and I see no call, myself, for this disturbance. But you know, miss, we have to do as we are bid."

"Who sent you out?" asked Jane.

"I had a call from the sergeant," replied the law minion. "He said some waman was raising Cain——"

"Did he say who she was?"

"No. He did not. But you know, miss, young women can raise a lot of trouble if a child appears—to disappear," he explained.

"Oh, yes indeed," agreed Jane. "I do know that. But I took the children at their grandmother's request, and I am a regularly accredited Social Service worker, with all the privileges that go with that duty."

Miss Walker breathed easier. Jane did appear to know what she was doing after all.

"What did you intend to do? Were you actually going to take these babies out in the night?" asked Jane in a shocked voice, intended also to convey shock.

"Well, I'll have to report," evaded the officer. "Could I phone from here?"

"Certainly," eagerly replied Miss Walker. "Step right into the office."

Jane stepped in with him. She wanted to know who made the charge of abduction—he had used the odious word.

It took an unusually long time to get in touch with the officer on the other end of the line, but it was finally accomplished. Then Officer Holmes, who was thus describing himself to the listening party, told that he had located the children, and that they were in the custody of a Social Service worker from the District Headquarters.

"Please ask who called up the police?" whispered Jane.

The request was repeated by Officer Holmes.

"Blair?" he called back. "No, Sayre? Oh, yes, Miss Dare?" he finally caught the name given him. "The sergeant said it was a Miss Dare."

"Carol Dare!" exclaimed Jane. "I thought as much! Well, she has tried to interfere with my work from the beginning, but this is more definite. She actually accused me of——"

"Well, you know miss," soothed the officer, "they says most anything when a baby disap-

pears. Nothing touches the crowd like that does."

Miss Walker was fidgeting. It was evident she would like to be rid of the babies since that seemed the safest stand to take.

"Who is Miss Dare?" she ventured aside to Jane.

"Some young woman who has nothing better to do than to make trouble," replied Jane bitterly. "Mrs. Jennings, the mother of the children, has been taking her advice about getting employment but she had not found any as yet. I am glad I have the children here. No matter what happens, as far as I am concerned, it is better for the little ones to be away from her. She would have no more conscience about their food or care——" Jane trailed off into unspoken condemnation.

The officer was tilting up and down in that way so descriptive of indecision. "Well?" he said looking from Jane to Miss Walker.

"What did the desk man say about it?" asked Jane, abruptly.

"He said I might take a look at them and leave them till morning."

"Very well," acceded Jane, while Miss Walker said:

"But my dear—Miss Allen——"

"Now don't worry, miss," the officer interrupted, "everything will be all O.K. I never knowed a child to stray off but the fire department was called out," he chortled. "Folks does get so fussy! But this new charity business, social-what-ever-you-call it, is doing a grand work." The officer might not have been socially polished but his heart was sound, at least.

Jane promptly led him upstairs to "have a look."

CHAPTER VII

WHEN BABIES WAKE

THE babies were not disturbed. Officer Holmes was evidently a man of family and he knew better than to risk the wrath of a disturbed child. He just glanced in from the door, shook his good natured head and smiled broadly. True, Judith was worth smiling at, as she spread her arms, pinion-like over Joy's bed, and little Jill came very near opening an inquisitive eye when Miss Walker spoke above a regular whisper. But in spite of these possibilities, the light was finally pulled down again, and Jane accompanied the man of the law to the front door.

"I intended to report very early at Miss Morgan's office," she said, "but if you think best, officer, I shall report at your office."

"Well, the worst of it is," explained Mr. Holmes, "a young woman can be—spitey." He

sort of hissed his coined word. "I've known them to stir up an awful rumpus over nothing."

"So have I," admitted Jane. "And this young lady would be apt to do just that. Well, suppose I go to your office first?"

"I would. That will be safer. Then, when you have a talk with the sergeant you will—head her off," advised the officer. "Anybody with half an eye could tell it is all right for the young ones to spend the night here. Abducting!" he scoffed. "Pity a lot of others couldn't be abducted like this," and he chuckled quite humanely.

"Abduction!" repeated Miss Walker, horrified. "Miss Allen, I hope nothing will prevent you from attending to this matter the very first thing in the morning," she cautioned.

"Nothing will," replied Jane, shaking her head in a way that might be variously interpreted.

The remainder of the night passed "like a falling star," Judith said, when she tried to open her eyes next morning.

"I was the 'shoot' and you were the 'sparklers,' Jane," she yawned. "It went just like that."

But the children were both wide awake with all that the statement implies. They were crawling over their benefactors, and over the furniture. They were asking all sorts of questions and mak-

ing all sorts of remarks, in fact if there is anything more active than young children at dawn, the specie has not yet been catalogued.

"Wait a minute, dear," begged Jane, when Joy climbed up on the book case and sat there with her chubby, little arms around Judith's one piece of art, described as Venus but usually called "Biffed." "Wait until Janie gets you——"

"Pretty dolly," declared the usurper. "Joy—we get dolly."

But Jane captured the climber. "What a tiny handful but what activity!" she remarked.

"She should have been called Dynamo," said Judith. "She is a self starter and spark plugger, and all the rest. Now, see how good little Jill is," she pointed out to the other inquisitive baby.

Jill was under the table and had the box that used to hold fudge.

A tap at the door.

"My word!" exclaimed Jane. "Who can it be——"

"It's I, Laura," came the welcome news.

Judith reached the door first and Laura entered simultaneously.

"I brought up the milk," said the non-combatant student. "What darlings!"

"Want them?" joked Judith. "I have had my

hand on this sock for half an hour—on and off, but I still have some distance to go,” she admitted, giving Joy’s little sock a tug. “I never knew socks were so violent.

“They are the most proficient wigglers I have ever encountered,” went on Judy. “Now Joy—we, if we don’t get socks on we can’t get breakfast. Breakfast,” repeated Judith. “Do you know what that means?”

“Means ohme-ohmy,” said the toddler.

“Ohme-ohmy!” echoed Jane. “What ever can that be?”

“We eats it,” said Jill, from her crumbs.

“Should we have it, whatever it is?” asked Laura, anxiously.

“Oh, yes,” affirmed Jill. “We just have to have it—ever-ree day, ev-er-ree sing-gul day.”

“Now children,” orated Jane, “we must hurry. Janie has to go out very err-ell-ee.”

“That’s right,” chirped Judith. “I’m glad I don’t have to go. Not that Mr. Holmes isn’t a ver-ree nice ma-han——”

“Shall I fix up the table?” offered Laura, who had been doing it all the time.

A nod approved.

“Now for the milk,” called out Jane expertly, and quite as if she expected her company to fall

to and lap up the big, chocolate cups full of that health-giving fluid.

"Me eat ohme-ohmy," rallied Joy.

"I, too," said Jill. The personal pronoun was beautifully acclaimed.

"Well, take the milk and the crackers and we'll get the other—thing later," promised Jane. "Come now—Joy."

But Joy had slipped down again and was turning over the leaves of a Latin grammar in search of "pitters."

"I cared for children for a time," said Laura. "I guess I can coax little Joy. Come now, baby," she said in her "coaxiest" voice. "Come and have a lovely breakfast."

But Joy liked the books.

Then Laura attempted force. She stooped, picked up the astonished child and sat her down between two determined knees.

Joy tried to wiggle loose. "Just take one nice cup of milk——" cooed Laura, and she lifted the cup.

The slightest move of a very small hand, it could not have been intentional, but it sent the milk down Laura's neck and brought it out the patch pocket in her nice, white linen skirt!

"Oh!" exclaimed a trio.

"Give her to me," demanded Jane with asperity. "How could Joy spoil Laura's pretty dress?" she chided.

"No Joy-we, mooca," said the child like a little Chinese.

"She means the milk did it," explained Jill. She had dropped the candy box and was now ready for her own meager repast.

Laura spilled the puddle out of her pocket into Jane's fruit jar. There was a marked lack of light housekeeping facilities at hand.

"I simply must run away and leave them here with you, Judith," said Jane. "But how are you going to get down to breakfast?"

"I'll stay," offered the good sport, Laura. "I don't mind children at all, and I just love this kind." She gave Joy a kiss on the top of her head where the bath should have begun.

"Go along Jane, but eat first," counselled Judith. "I think we will both have to be excused from lecture this a. m. I feel as if I could give one myself on home emergency economics."

Laura had retrieved Joy, and Jill was in the chair with the elevation of cushions. Then the eating did begin in earnest. Jane slipped out and she wore street clothes, suitable for court, if need be.

With the milk and crackers and two oranges (Judith was not sure about oranges and milk but Laura sanctioned the combination), the rebels were fed, and only an occasional reference to the "ohme-ohmy" disturbed the peace of the family.

"I just wonder what that can be," mused Judith. "Sounds like a Japanese cook."

"I wonder if it could be oat meal?" asked Laura.

"That's it! Oat meal!" chirped Jill. "Joy-we allus calls it the funny name."

"Oat meal!" repeated Judith incredulously. "Of course."

"We shall have that next time," promised Laura. "I say, Judy, I'll make some after the things are cleared, if you think they could eat it."

"I am afraid they will not be with—us long," intimated Judith. "You know we had no end of a row last night." She had to talk in chunks.

"Oh, I see," said Laura. "Is that why you didn't want to fetch them down to breakfast?"

"Well, that and other reasons," replied Judith. "But I say, Laura, this Social Service business is—strenuous. I thought the regular sports filled in the home vacancy, but for a real, good, stiff filling, try Social Service."

"Where's Dran'ma?" called out Joy. She was climbing on the window sill and Judith was holding on to her scanty rompers.

"Grandma is sick," said Jill sharply. "Can't you know anything Joy-we?"

"Tourse I tan," said the voice from the window ledge. "An' I goin' walkin' now," came the surprising announcement.

"You can't go yet," shrilled Jill. "Don't you know we haven't had our swim?"

"Swim," repeated Judith, ominously.

"Bath," elucidated Laura. "Can't we give it to them?"

"Oh, I wouldn't dare!" breathed Judith. "Please don't mention it."

"Why?" pressed Laura, evidently anxious to give all her latent child knowledge an airing.

"Take those clothes off again?" whispered Judith, for little Jill was observing, keenly. "Why Laura Lee! You don't know what you ask! Suppose the law should come in while we were—operating!"

But Laura just hated to omit the bath; she was not quite satisfied with the breakfast, and it was almost a positive surety she would presently propose the promenade Joy had mentioned.

"Now Judith," came the preamble, "I'll take

care of them while you go down and eat. Run along. You had an indifferent dinner last night and you need to make up for it. We will have a lovely time while you are away. Won't we, children?" she crooned.

"Joy-we go to Dran'ma," said the youngest, reaching for her cap. It was on the book-stand and books came with it.

"Oh Joy, can't you know anything?" again came the scorn of her older sister. Jill could always content herself. This time it was the incense burner—the little black god with his mouth open.

Judith was willing to relinquish her task at the window. She loved children, as most girls do, but she had had these two for "quite a spell," as Dozia would have said, and after all, even a reverend senior is somewhat human—just in spots, of course. Now, Judith felt unmistakably human around the "risibles." Dozia again.

"Sleeping in a lump," she apologized, as she prepared for the departure, "isn't exactly like the usual downy, Laura."

"I could have brought two small cots, the folding kind," said Laura. Plainly the children should have applied to Laura for their night's lodging.

"There's someone," said Judith. Every step towards her door gave her a start.

"It's I," said the unmistakable voice of Dozia. "Here I come," she continued glibly. "Well, all 'dressed an' everythin'!"

"You can stay with Laura," suggested Judith, "while I go down. Jane is out—courting."

"Don't keep them prisoners in this room!" objected the girl who had slept in a bed. "Let's take them down the halls."

"Oh, no. Please don't," begged Judith. "They might—escape. I am responsible for them. And you don't know what that means, Doze. You couldn't."

"The idea! You are just frayed out, Jude. These youngsters are going right out to be introduced to Wellington," declared the energetic student who had not been awake half of the night. "Come along, Kiddies. Want to see the biggest and best place on earth?"

"I yawnt to," agreed Joy, ready for anything—once.

"I haven't got my hair combed right," objected the mature Jill.

"Oh, your hair looks lovely," complimented Dozia. "Couldn't be prettier. It is just as even—as even," she hesitated, looking around for

more clothes. The rompers seemed rather inadequate but very effective.

"The risk be upon your own head, then, Doze," threatened Judith. "I am away. Good-bye darlings, and be lovely and good to mind Cousin Doze and Cousin Laura. They will take the best of care of you," declared the retreating Judith.

A few moments later two students, Laura and Dozia, paraded down Madison corridors with a child each on the left side of each. The parade was halted before it had gone three doors.

Every girl within sight, inside or outside of the rooms that were being hastily vacated, rushed to admire.

"Babes!" they exclaimed.

"Our kindergarten special," announced Dozia, loftily.

"Cherubs!" sang out Norma, who was almost on her knees and quite on her haunches greeting the little strangers.

They liked it. Jill posed and even did a jerk of a curtsy while Joy did not hesitate to accept the "piggy-back" Winifred offered.

"Come along outside," ordered Dozia, the sergeant-at-arms. "They need the early morning air."

A parade followed.

CHAPTER VIII

CURIOSITY AND THE GIRLS

IT was glorious while it lasted but it didn't last long. The babes were gone and Wellington was back to normal.

"Tell us about it, Jane, or we shall die of curiosity," declared Nettie Brocton. She was among those not present at the ceremonies of giving back to Mrs. Castbolt, grandmother, the children, Jill and Joy Jennings.

"Miss Morgan said I did perfectly right," Jane began. "The children could not have been left without proper protection, and that young woman, who has nothing to do and all the time in the world to do it in, would be the very last one we should allow tiny tots to mingle with. We did not succeed in giving them all the attentions of juvenile life, but we did feed them; Laura saw to that. This Carol Dare—can you imagine the person back of such a name? She would probably feast them on lobster Newburg."

"That can't be her name," commented Nettie. "Isn't she an actress?"

"Not even," replied Jane. "She is sort of a broker, goes around urging others to go in for the stage." Jane was too tired to go out for her regular day's work in the field so had been excused for the afternoon.

"Did she appear against you?" asked Judith.

"No indeed. She sent along a letter to the officer, and then he said 'All right.' He was the most capable judge I have ever been up before." She spread a hand over her face coyly.

"Agreeing with you—he would be," drolled Judith. "Well, I believe, Jane, you have, as the modern poet would say, let yourself in for a lot of trouble in this case. It is complicated with a capital C. How about the youth? The handsome young man of pleasant memory?" asked Judith.

"He's there," sighed Jane.

"Where?" demanded Nettie. Interest was picking up.

"Why, he's somewhere," said Jane a little drowsily.

"Who is he?" Nettie asked directly.

"Oh, we haven't named him yet," said Judith, with a show of irritation.

"You mean the young man I am supposed to interview?" Jane was off her guard now.

"That's the chap," chimed in Dozia. They were in the gym but not in action. The long bench held a group of the usual faithfuls.

"Well," Jane yawned openly, "I have his address."

"Lovely," chirped Nettie. "Let's have it, Jane. We might be able to help you out. I love that kind of Social Service."

"Whatever are you talking about?" Jane sat up and rubbed her rebellious eyes. "The idea, of writing to a client of mine."

"Client!" yelled Ted Guthrie.

"Ye-ah," agreed Jane, slumping over on the nearest shoulder. It belonged to Winifred Ayres.

"Oh, you are positively mean, Jane Allen," pouted Nettie. "There you go and get us all keyed up and then drop us. What about the young man?"

"I'll tell you when I find out, maybe," said Jane. "Can't you understand that this is confidential work?"

"But those children?" pressed the insatiable Nettie. "They surely were not confidential. You had them right here in our midst."

"My midst," corrected Judith. "Jane, do tell the pests about your wonderful experience in court. How the officer glared at you and how you, poor inexperienced girl, right fresh from the ranks of Wellington——" she moaned tragically.

"How you almost fainted when you heard sentence pronounced," assisted Dozia, flippantly. "Yes, Jane darlink, unburden your heavy heart to me; we are here to console."

"It's her head," complained Winifred, shifting enough to joggle Jane from her recumbent posture.

"It may sound funny," inserted Jane, "but I should like to see one of you try the same little lark. I am almost dead."

"It was the children," explained Judith elaborately. "They were so restless last night. And the nurse would go out to the movies——"

"Seriously Jane," begged Dozia. "What did happen when you flew out this morning?"

"Just what I told you. The officer allowed Miss Morgan to place the children in the care of a worker while the grandmother convalesced. I am sure we could not take care of them here."

"I am just as sure," agreed Judith. "But where is the young mother?"

"She is not to be prevented from seeking em-

ployment which she is sorely in need of," declared Jane. "She went after it the day her own mother was taken ill. And Social Service is so splendidly consistent it would not dream of recalling her. She must be given every opportunity to help herself and her young family."

"But that brother! At college!" scoffed Judith. "He may be handsome, Janie, but I think he's a slacker."

"I don't," said Jane simply.

"You're holding back," charged Dozia. "You would not say that if you had not good reason. What is the extenuating circumstance? We claim the right to know," sang out Dozia.

"Say girls! What is this! A trial by jury?" flashed Jane. "I'm going home, and maybe to bed. A little sleep would go a great ways with me right now. And I have a lot to do tonight."

This broke up the party. But her companions knew Jane too well to believe that she was telling them all the interesting story. Even Judith seemed curious.

Nettie fell back with Ted. "It's all very well to joke about it," she said, "but it is perfectly plain that Jane has had a most strenuous time. I told them that Social Service fad would be simply terrible."

"Why, they have taken up the regular course," said Ted valiantly.

"Oh, yes, I know that. But Doze promised she would coax Jane back to help with the prom arrangements. You ought to know that I miss the experienced crowd. I am rather new at work, and there's such a heap of it," Nettie complained.

"I don't agree with sending the tickets through the mail," commented Ted. "We did that once before and got a lot of undesirables."

"We have to help the fund, and I am sure our families and immediate friends could never fill up a prom," said Nettie. "Well, I have a good working committee on the music and the decorations. That helps."

"Thanks," said Ted. "I'll do my best. But with real babies invading, and handsome young men in the offing, it seems to me even a first class prom may seem tame."

"Oh, Jane and Judy will be back in time for the actual event," forecasted Nettie. "It's these endless arrangements," she sighed, deeply.

"Is there really a young man in this case?" said Ted, cautiously.

"I believe so. But as far as I can see it is the young woman. She who tried to make

trouble for Jane. I would be on the lookout for her. It is a remarkable but positive fact that some persons take delight in upsetting the good work of others. She may have a motive, of course."

"They call it 'ulterior,'" joked Ted, "but it seems to me it is worse than that."

"I am sorry I missed seeing the youngsters," went on Nettie. "I happened to be out exercising this morning. When I came back the place looked like the night after a fire. Everyone was so excited. And it was nothing, more-nor-less, than the visit of two pretty children."

"Oh, yes it was. There was a midnight call from an officer, and you know how dear old Wellington takes a thing like that. Goes right off into kinks of consternation," declared Dozia.

"And Miss Walker was on," added Ted. "Well, I missed that. A lot of things happen in Madison."

But a lot more things were happening outside of Madison; for only a few days later developments in the girls' cases were crowding so closely one upon the other, that Jane, at least, found her capable hands rather full.

In a stately little homestead just beyond the city limits, Mrs. Castbolt was regaining her

fragile strength. Attending to her wants a sister hovered about, the same type, the same voice and almost the same personality. She had been called from a distance to fill in the place left vacant by Mrs. Jennings, mother of the two interesting children.

"I cannot understand why Mabel should stay this way," faltered the visitor. "You say a young girl is watching dear little Jill and Joy?"

"Yes, Mary. Mabel has been heart sick. One can't blame her, after losing such a fine husband." A pause rendered fitting tribute to the lost one. "But I was glad to have her take the trial. It may give her heart," said Mrs. Castbolt.

"And you had to apply to—charity?" Mary asked, in a shocked tone.

"Oh, no sister. It was not *charity*," replied Mrs. Castbolt hastily. "The young lady called, and her father knew our—brother."

"Our brother, indeed. I don't see how you can speak of him so calmly. He and his millions."

"But they are his, and he worked hard for them—I——"

"Jennie, if you are going to defend Reynolds there is no use continuing this conversation." said

Mary decisively. "I can never look at the matter as you do."

"Well, sister, since you feel so bitter I shall not mention the subject again. But your nephew, Renny, his namesake, and Mabel's brother, must be considered. What are we going to do about him?"

"He is as headstrong as his uncle," replied Mary. "I don't see how anything we may say will ever influence him."

"So we won't spoil your visit with any more of my troubles," said Mrs. Castbolt, kindly. "I am sure it was too good of you to leave home so unexpectedly."

"I have been wanting to come, Jennie, but I am sorry to find you laid up. We can't run around like we used to," sighed the visiting sister. She was a tall, stately woman, gray to snowy whiteness, as was also Mrs. Castbolt. Their surroundings were as genteel as their personalities, and it was not strange that such women should resent the word "charity," as applied to themselves.

It was upon this scene that Jane intruded a few minutes later. She was coming for her private interview, and the troublesome Miss Carol Dare, she who tried to show Jane incompetent in tak-

ing the little ones into Wellington, she was sure to be out of the way this time. She was off to the city following what she had called an "important clue."

Jane was made comfortable by the ladies. Mrs. Castbolt had shown a decided preference for this sunny-haired girl, and with her, at least, youth was not an objection.

"You are so much better," Jane smiled. "Having your sister is just the thing to cheer you up."

"I have you to thank for that," said Mrs. Castbolt. "I should not have sent for her had not you insisted."

"And you were right, my dear," chimed in Mary, whose full name was Miss Webster. "I was glad to come but sorry, of course, to find sister so ill. But we will soon have her all right again. She has been having too much worry and no one to share it with," finished the visitor.

"I came today to see if I could not share it," said Jane. And just then she *did* feel pitifully young.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST INTERVIEW

JANE explained why she had to ask so many questions.

"I thought at first," she said, "it was going to be difficult to be so inquisitive, but as one gets into the work, I find myself so interested, and I am so anxious to have my case turn out satisfactory I just follow the rules without any embarrassment."

"I wish I could tell you what a relief it is to share our confidence with someone who is able to advise," said Mrs. Castbolt, her tired eyes saying more than her words. "Before you came, Miss Allen, I just thought, and thought until my brain would take no more orders. It ran along a tangent. Even my sick spell did not seem so overpowering when I knew you were taking care of the children," she sighed.

Jane laughed a little. It was necessary to toss

in as much merriment as could be reasonably inserted, otherwise the interview would become drab and gloomy with sordid details.

"I had such a time with the tots," she confessed. "The girls at college simply went crazy over them, of course; and they were as good as gold."

"Really, were they?" asked the grandmother. "Jill told me Joy wanted everything within reach. The poor tots have been knocked about quite a little since their good father passed away." Mrs. Castbolt sighed heavily and her sister, Miss Webster, echoed the sentiment.

"Harry was such a wonderful, fine man, but he had that temperament; all boy. He could not see far enough ahead to plan for this awful contingency. Sister, here, always felt that Mabel would do something with her own talent. You see we are both seminary girls," there was pardonable pride in her voice, "and when Mabel graduated from college we felt she would study further. But these young folks!" another sigh. "She was married the very year she graduated!"

Jane sighed herself. Married the year she graduated! The clause repeated itself. Just imagine!

"And you were seminary graduates?" asked Jane, referring to the mother and sister. "Then,

of course, your daughter, Mrs. Castbolt, had many influential friends to call upon?"

"Yes, she has. But Mabel is very—proud. She will not make her plight known. Her brother, Renny, will soon be finished at his college, you know, the two are as chummy as they were when children." This was all mother.

"We could relieve the whole situation," interrupted Miss Webster, "if we could only get our own brother to alter a very stubborn mind. Although he is our only brother, I must say it. He does not treat us as he should. All our parent's means were spent in educating the family. Then our brother, with that education as a background, acquired wealth. He has done much for us, helped sister, who was left a widow, when very young, to educate Mabel and Renny, but he has such unalterable opinions——"

"The fact is he did not like my husband," said Mrs. Castbolt bravely. "Now, I don't feel I can go to him when Mabel has been left just as I was."

"And Renny, his name is Reynolds, called after this very uncle," explained Miss Webster, "he is so high spirited—well, I simply cannot explain the situation," she ended disconsolately.

"I think you are very wise not to interfere

with your son's getting his degree," said Jane. "If he is armed with that from such a college, he will have no difficulty in obtaining a splendid position. I have heard father say they just wait for the boys to finish there, then take them right into important mining positions."

"Your father is a miner?" asked Mrs. Castbolt, eagerly.

"He is retired, but *was* a miner. He still lives out on the big mountain. I believe he knows your brother," added Jane.

"Not Henry Allen?" exclaimed Miss Webster. "Why, what a small world this is! I remember when Henry Allen came to visit our brother. Don't you remember, Jennie?"

"Since I knew a Miss Allen was our good little angel," she paused to allow a smile its chance, "I have been wondering. It is really brother's friend?"

"Yes, I have had a letter from dad. He was not too keen on my going into this work, but agreed just as soon as he heard it was to touch upon the needs of a friend," Jane paused and tossed her head up. "Don't you think we are all selfish after all? Don't you think, ladies, we are prone to stand by our friends?" she inquired, kindly.

"That is exactly why your organization is so much needed," replied Mrs. Castbolt. "With *you* everyone in need is your friend."

"I do hope you will feel just that way about us," said Jane warmly. "Then I will not have any trouble in asking all these seemingly confidential questions."

"But I cannot get over your father being Henry Allen," said Miss Webster. She was agasp with surprise.

"And he is about the same boy, I fancy, he must always have been," said the affectionate daughter. "You see, I have to make a note of the family connections. It helps so in prescribing. Don't you think our work is a wonderful new profession! We do about what a doctor does, it seems to me."

"Yes, you get the symptoms and prescribe the remedy," agreed Mrs. Castbolt. "But do tell me about Jill and Joy? When shall I go out to see them."

"Whenever you are able," replied Jane. "I hope *I* shall be able to go out tomorrow afternoon. They are the dearest children for adjusting themselves to their environment," declared Jane.

"That's because they have had so many homes

lately," said Mrs. Castbolt, with her tired sigh.

Jane prodded herself mentally and started out boldly to cover her assigned task. She must ask a lot of questions and in their answers find the key that would, she hoped, solve the problem of the Mrs. Castbolt's and her daughter's, Mrs. Jennings', unusual difficulties. When the case was first handed over, it resembled so many others that no special plans were made to handle it, but soon it was discovered that two mothers, Mrs. Castbolt and Mrs. Jennings, were affected, that two tiny children had their home threatened, and the acknowledged aim of Social Service is to build up the original home. Besides this, there was a young man at college who should be kept there at least a short time longer. How to do this without actually tapping a charity fund—the very last resource of the system that knows the real value of self-respect for the individual—all this now confronted Jane, as she bravely undertook her important work.

Back of the apparent troubles was still another. A note was due and overdue and unless prompt steps were taken at once the pleasant little home would belong to strangers.

After a few moments' conversation, Jane unearthed a clue. In the Social Service code a

"clue" has its place on the list of important outlines.

"And this young woman, Carol Dare," said Jane gently. "What is her connection with Mrs. Jennings' business?"

Mrs. Castbolt drew her lips into a firm, hard line. "She knew Mabel, my daughter, and also my son," she said in a low voice. "Somehow she also got acquainted in my brother's office, I don't know just how, perhaps she worked there, but since she has been running here and perhaps running there, there is no telling what mischief she has stirred up."

"She may have influenced our brother against us," said the younger woman. Reynolds Webster is stubborn but he was always just," she continued, "and he would never see Jenny in this predicament, actually losing her home, without coming to her aid."

Jane thoughtfully made a few more notes. She knew how adroit a young woman could be in the matter of stirring up trouble, and it was evident Mrs. Castbolt was not telling all she knew about Carol Dare.

"You see," said Miss Webster. "I have enough for my own needs. I am willing to share that——"

"Sister!" checked Mrs. Castbolt. "You have done too much already. It is no easy matter to support four helpless people. My idea in seeking aid was merely to obtain it as a loan—until Renny could graduate from college," she said again.

"Unfortunately there is no fund for such a loan," said Jane. In her brief experience she had found more than one appeal for loans, just for a short time. But such arrangements are not standardized.

"Then you can't really do anything?" Mrs. Castbolt asked timidly.

"Oh, indeed we can," said Jane cheerfully. "But the usual procedure must be gone through with. You see, it is all so new to me I am not efficient as the others might be, and it takes me longer."

"We will like you all the better for it," declared Miss Webster. "We would hate to have anyone come in here and just ride over us," she declared with asperity.

"When can I see Mrs. Jennings?" Jane asked next.

"She promised to come back yesterday," said her mother. "I am worried about her. She is so temperamental and so proud."

"But she wouldn't neglect the children!" said Miss Webster indignantly.

"Not consciously," replied the mother. "But this Dare young woman has such a way about her. Mabel does not really like her but she held out such promises." Mrs. Castbolt was plainly in mental distress.

"Did Mrs. Jennings go to the city with her?" Jane asked.

"She was to meet her there," said Mrs. Castbolt.

"Has she sent you any word?"

"A message the first night she was away. It was the next day that I was taken ill. Others may have come——" The mother paused, agitated.

"Could a mother abandon her darling little ones?" Jane was thinking, and as if Mrs. Castbolt divined her thoughts she spoke again:

"Of course Mabel will return the first opportunity. You see, Miss Dare made the plans."

"Just where is Mrs. Jennings now?" asked Jane bluntly.

"She went to a school—a school of acting, they called it."

"A school of acting?" There was surprise in Jane's voice.

"Yes." Mrs. Castbolt compressed her lips nervously. "Miss Dare made an agreement," she continued, "we were to furnish the money and she was to get my daughter a position with a good salary."

"And it cost two hundred dollars——" interrupted Miss Webster. It was very plain Miss Webster did not agree with the doings of Miss Dare.

"Yes," said Mrs. Castbolt, shaking her head and brushing something from her eyes. "It was—our last——"

Jane now saw what she had been searching for. It was the fact that Carol Dare had taken the money from these people and made rash promises to young Mrs. Jennings. She may have been honest enough in her intentions, but that money would have forestalled the immediate danger of foreclosure.

"Could anything have happened to Mabel?" asked Mrs. Castbolt. She addressed both Jane and Miss Webster.

"Now sis, don't you go getting all worked up," cautioned Miss Webster. "I am afraid you have been doing too much for a sick woman."

"Yes," said Jane, rising, "and I hope I have not been too—troublesome. But the only way

we can help is to be armed with all the facts. Might I ask one more question?"

"Certainly, my dear," said Mrs. Castbolt. "I do not feel badly at all. It is the thought of our little store being gone and that my daughter may be miserable in the city, worrying——"

"Mabel is no fool," said Miss Webster. "She will discover soon enough, whether this is a real position or some fraud. Of course, I should never have agreed to her taking up the stage——"

"But the children both have dramatic talent," interrupted Mrs. Castbolt.

"Has your son?" asked Jane. Somehow she felt this was a leading question.

"Oh, yes indeed," spoke the proud mother. "Renny is head of his college dramatic club and has done some very fine acting."

"And lost you your brother's opinion by doing so," said Miss Webster, primly.

Again Jane wondered. She lifted her gray eyes first to one and then to the other woman. What a strange mixture! Dramatic talent, gentility, education and now perhaps—poverty! Her sympathy was confusing her judgment.

"Renny has had more than one offer for the professional stage," said his mother suddenly.

"And only last week he sent us fifty dollars he had earned substituting for some actor."

"And is Miss Dare an actress?" asked Jane.

"Oh yes," again. "She met Renny when he played with his college club and she was very anxious to have him keep to the stage. She promised him all sorts of inducements." The mother's enthusiasm was easily understood.

So Miss Dare had designs upon Renny's dramatic talent! Could that be the real motive for her interference?

A few more questions completed the report for Jane's first formal interview, and when the data had been obtained she took leave, for the time, of her client and the helpful Miss Mary Webster.

CHAPTER X

THE INTERESTING DISCOVERY

A THRILL of interest akin to excitement, swept over Jane as she went back to Wellington. Judith met her; she herself was returning from her field work.

"What's new?" sang out Judith.

"A lot of things," replied Jane. Her voice vibrated with energy and when that quality was manifest at the end of the day it indicated one thing: Something startling!

Judith sidled up to Jane. "Well, unburden your conscience," she ordered. "I know you have solved the mystery."

"Not quite," replied Jane, "but I have a clue. And Judy!" she paused to swallow a chuckle. "It's your handsome young man!"

"Oh, that's nothing new," scoffed Judith. "I told you that from the first. They are always at the bottom of problems. What's his name?"

"Renny," replied Jane.

"Renny," repeated Judith. "That sounds foreign."

"It isn't though. It's plain American Reynolds, Renny for short. Like it?"

Judith sniffed. She was not going to appear too interested. Jane took the cue and walked along indifferently. Girls were flocking into the campus, greeting each other with shouts and hails. There was danger of someone tagging along, so Jane hooked her arm into Judith's.

"I don't want to answer a lot of silly questions," she remarked. "Let's run along."

"Not afraid of mine?" returned Judith. "I haven't quite finished on this Renny boy, but I am not in any particular hurry, Jane," she parried.

"How did you make out?" queried Jane, politely.

"Bagged two more youngsters. Such nice, interesting little chaps, too. I might have proposed going into retirement and waiting for one of them to grow up. He has the most attractive little limp, and rolls his eyes like a movie comedian. He really almost won me over to his side," admitted Judith. "He wants to go to work in the licorice works. Says his grandmother has a cough."

"Small boys always have grandmothers," said Jane. "I remember one little chap who was forever staying home for his grandmother's funeral. But how do you like it, Judy?"

"A lot better than fudge parties. And I am glad that girls do not, as a rule, play hookey. I should hate to have to cope with girls. They are so—adroit." The last word was rolled with marked elocutionary effect.

"I find it even more strenuous that I had expected," admitted Jane. "And Judy, after dinner, will you confer with me? I just have to be advised——"

"Your young man?"

"Yes, I don't feel quite capable of handling a case with a young actress and your actor-man involved," said Jane, girlish pride asserting itself.

"Jane! Never! You haven't struck anything so wonderful!" exclaimed Judith. "I won't care for any dinner. I shall come right into your little den, my head and heart given freely—digestion and the rest of it flung to the winds——"

"But the meeting?" interrupted Jane. "We have got to attend that."

"Oh, so we did—promise," moaned Judith. "Well, Nett deserves to be helped. She has been

working day and night, and the whole class consider us—slackers.”

“I told Nettie I would come in when the preliminaries were all fixed up. We have been on the committees every year, and I feel it is time now the others had a try,” said Jane. “Still, we must show an active interest at this stage.”

“But joking aside, Jane, you have to go on with this case and perhaps you would feel better to talk it over even with silly me. Miss Morgan said we could discuss our cases together, but I don’t mind telling you right now, I have one that’s a secret. If I ever told you about it you would be sure to veto my plans. Just wait till you hear!” promised Judith. “No case was ever so thrilling.”

“Judy dear, I hope you are not carrying your jokes into the ranks of Social Service——”

“Jokes! Jane Allen! How dare you? This is no joke. You will die of envy that you did not conceive the idea yourself. There! I am not going to give you the least hint. But just wait! Wait until you see the scheme carried out. Then, oh Wellington, sit up and note my triumph!”

Jane knew Judith was in earnest. She vaguely wondered what the big exciting scheme might mean, but her own case was too absorbing to

allow of definite distraction even at the other prospect.

The girls parted in the corridors, Judith slipping off to hold secret conclave with some "accomplice," and Jane reporting at the office for having omitted a lecture that afternoon.

Once within the hall the two students of Social Service were besieged with the excited committees all working for the success of the mid-year prom. There was Nettie, she insisted Jane and Judith take their regular places on the distribution committees, to make sure the invitations went where they should and did not go where they should not.

Even dinner hour was given over to snatched conferences, for the Wellington prom was not, by any means, a small affair, it never had been and would not be this time at the hands of Nettie and her followers.

So it was not possible for Jane and Judith to slip off and make up their notes on Social Service as they had wished to do. In fact, it was two whole days later before they could so much as take even recreation time to themselves. It was one round of meetings, conferences, directing cards, filling out lists, and even attending to printing—Judith had always been on the print-

ing committee and she could not beg off now.

These details, however, differ so slightly from all of their kind as to be interesting only to those immediately concerned. It was the case of "Blighted Prosperity" as Judith facetiously termed Jane's case, that held particulars of vital general interest. Of this we must hear the details.

"You don't mean to tell me you are afraid, actually afraid to tackle that angle of it, Jane?" asked Judith, her face as surprised as her voice—ostensibly.

"I didn't say afraid, Judy. I said it did seem a little bit too complicated for a mere beginner. I know I have been given this case on account of father. The rich, old uncle figures very definitely throughout, and he has always been a friend of dad's. Besides this, I have dad to consider from my own, personal interest. He would not want me to go into this course if he did not know exactly what I was working upon, and I would not think it fair to deceive him."

"I see: a double incentive," mused Judith. "Now, my folks are simply glad to know that I happen to be kept busy, think it is sort of a charity to me to give me something useful to do. They have not an idea what the ultimate out-

come will—do to—them.” Judith pulled her face into an original expression. It was not hers by nature.

“But Judy,” Jane shifted into a position that made preparation for an extended controversy, “I find that Carol Dare is twined in and out of this Jennings-Castbolt affair like—a poison ivy vine. Every time I drag out a root of the trouble in one place, it catches on somewhere else.”

“Of course she’s in love with Renny,” said Judith coolly. “That’s the main issue, you’ll find,” she declared finally.

“I don’t think it is,” said Jane seriously.

“Why?”

“Some other young man pays all her transient expenses, like cab hire and all that. Not that she wouldn’t let a man do that much without having serious designs upon him,” said Jane quickly, “but she really seems quite devoted to him.”

“Then you have seen the ‘loidy’?” Judith sat up straight and threw a wild look at the defenseless Jane.

“Yes, for a few moments. She and Mr. Scott drove up grandly to the Castbolt home just as I was leaving. I could not turn back though I knew well the pair might try to undo most of what I had been trying to do in the two hours

previous. Oh, I tell you, Judy, this business of interfering in other folks' affairs is trying," sighed Jane.

"Faint heart never yet won an important case," said Judith, "and I can never imagine a heart like yours being faint," she finished.

"You don't know it," replied Jane. "But then——"

"What's the real worry? I see you have not enough confidence in me to blurt it out," Judith challenged.

"Can't see that you are 'blurting out' your case either," retorted her companion. A good natured chuckle evened up the debate.

"But I shall, as soon as it's all ready; all set, as Doze says. And it is almost ready, Janie. You will certainly be surprised," she promised again.

"Did you know, Judith, that our handsome young man is an actor of no mean ability?" came the sensational question.

"Oh-o-o-h!" gasped Judith falling in a heap. "An actor! Jane Allen! You get all the luck!" she crumpled down further into the comfortable cushions.

"But in this case it is not lucky," continued Jane. "You see, he is reported as being so fine,

so manly and all that. But the ability to act usually brings—temptation.” The wisdom was assumed.

“It should,” said the incorrigible Judith. “If I made a hit in our play last year I would not be here now, figuring out old, gloomy, Social Service cases. I’d be counting the lights in some glittering——”

“And Mrs. Jennings is, I am afraid, chasing that rainbow made of stage promises,” continued Jane, ignoring the phantasy, “The family funds were actually depleted to a standstill in order to satisfy a demand made by Carol Dare. I found that much out after difficult probing. Now, any girl, even a freshie, would know better than to put money and confidence into that sort of thing,” complained Jane with obvious scorn.

“But Jane, darlink, I have always found that lack of brains goes with real talent. Business ability and talent seem at odds, usually. You see, this Mrs. Jennings wants to act, therefore she cannot see the significance of conserving the family dollar.”

“You are right, in spite of the levity, Judy. Folks who want to go on the stage seem to overlook every other consideration. But what bothers me is, how a mere senior at Wellington is going

to adjust matters. Dozia would call it 'bustin' in.' Pardon the digression."

"Certainly, but don't lose the trail," Judith replied.

"As I was saying I cannot see how 'merely me' is going to intrude with a lot of rules, and standards, and break up such a powerful combination as that made by this Miss Dare. She has Mrs. Jennings so hypnotized she actually induced her to leave those children with their grandmother; you want to remember that, Jude."

"No, I want to forget that. Didn't I sleep on the floor a whole, mortal night?"

"You did, dear, and you will be blessed for it, if there is any reward for virtue going around. But what would you advise me to do? You see, I have these facts," she called off. "Mrs. Jennings is apparently under the influence of Carol Dare. The latter is promoting some moving picture or theatrical enterprise; the children of Mrs. Jennings and her mother also must be cared for, Mrs. Jennings claims she is trying to earn an honest living, that she has talent for stage or pictures and that she should be allowed to try out her talent."

"Oh, do breathe Jane. When you get going you—go."

"I feel like a cabinet of stale news," said Jane, "and it is a relief to release some of it. The really queer part of the whole thing is that the son, Renny, sent home money from his own theatrical performance, and since the uncle has found out he is inclined to take stage parts he is simply furious, and has deserted the entire group."

"The old bear! Why shouldn't a boy earn money with his college team that way, when he needs it?" asked Judith, indignantly.

"And Mrs. Castbolt says the Dare lady brings messages back and forth from the banker's office. Now, how does she get in there?"

"Perhaps she substitutes for an office girl. I tell you honestly, Jane Allen, you will find the real motive moving the Dare creature is what is commonly called Love. Of course it is not really, but it goes by that name in polite society. The other name for it is Vanity."

Jane knit her brows. Judith was imparting knowledge in her own jolly way. Jane was obtaining advice in her own simple trusting manner. So they planned and planned, with no thought of the possible consequences, but with the optimism of youth; while the threat of actualities hung over them like a sword with the silken thread.

CHAPTER XI

THE ADOPTION OF GRANDPA TODD

NOT all the experiences, nor all "the luck," was to go to Jane. Judith was working against any such contingency. Not even the prom with its numerous and endless duties, prevented her from making a public demonstration of her intentions two days after her conference with Jane.

That Jane had to talk things over was easily understood, for the Jennings case was assuming new angles of complications almost daily. Not the least of these was that bringing Carol Dare and her questionable interest to the fore; but Judith's work thus far had been confined to delinquents, in the persons of children who stayed away from school without sufficient cause. The country in late fall and early winter holds a strong lure for energetic youngsters, and Judith

Stearns was called upon to use her own best energies to combat the beguiling influence.

But she did not intend to work solely among this juvenile element. She proved it.

The committees were all assembled in the gym when Judith broke in. Her eyes were dancing and her cheeks blazing. There might have been guilt in the evidence but there was also joy—joy, defiant.

“Come on, Grandpa Todd. Don’t mind the girls. They won’t bite.”

The end of the sentence pointed to an old man. As in the professional advertisements the real object was pointed to by Judith.

“I’m comin’ miss, an’ I’m not a bit afraid—of girls,” spoke the man who trailed after Judith.

The committees ceased “functioning.” They sat up straight and stared. Ted Guthrie opened her mouth and Winifred Ayres blinked simultaneously. They always did in excitement.

“Girls!” hailed Judith triumphantly, “I’ve brought you a friend to adopt.”

A “variegated” silence followed. The red was Nettie’s for she objected to the interruption, and the yellow was Blanche Early’s, she disliked Judith to the point of “couldn’t bear her.”

“Yes, friends,” Judith’s voice soared to the

heights of enthusiasm, "this is Grandpa Todd, and he needs work, and he is going to get it here." Her foot gave the period.

"All I want is a chance to earn m' living," Grandpa managed to say. He pulled his necktie all but off in the effort.

"But the men apply for work——" Blanche Early tried to say, but Judith was ready with an objection.

"We all know that the *ordinary* sort of work is obtained through the office, but this is different. I want you to *adopt* Grandpa," said Judith.

Jane understood. She jumped up and said so. "We could help Judith's friend by supporting his claim to work here," she pointed out. "The college can usually make room for one more helper, but we have nothing to say about who such a helper shall be. Now, if we all unite and ask that——"

"Silas Todd," assisted the stranger. "Silas Todd age seventy-five," he announced pompously.

"That Mr. Todd be given work here," continued Jane with a smile that repaid Grandpa Todd for his help, "I am sure he will prove satisfactory." Jane felt like a platform orator, for her words were very trite, but she had none

better at her command in the new field of personnel provider for Wellington.

"Yes, that's it," agreed Judith radiantly. "All we have to do is to ask that Grandpa be given work. He is sure to prove satisfactory, for he held one place——"

"The one job for thirty years, and only quit then because the road was pulled up. My gate house was pulled down and sent to the scrap heap, but for the few bits I managed to save," he half sighed, "Just the old lanterns and the chair—it tilted up as I liked it to. And then there was a couple of pictures. You know," he paused a trifle embarrassed that no one had charitably interrupted, for he had no idea of talking at such a length.

Judith understood him and came to the rescue.

"He was gate keeper or tender at the private factory crossing and they tore up the crossing," she said emphatically.

"They did that. Now, if I had-of worked for the reg'lar road they'd of pensioned me. But the factory was one of them that had to quit lately. They're sidin' wasn't doin' anythin', and of course they had to sell out to the reg'lar road. When they build up they're goin' to make a curve out to the junction," (Grandpa Todd believed in

details as most old persons do), "then, maybe, they'll take me on again," he said hopefully.

"He is not the sort of person who whines," Judith declared. "I only found out how needy he was by accident——"

"Oh, I got a bite to eat and I didn't mind sleepin' in the shanty I made from the railroad stuff," interrupted the man. "But with the winter coming, and not much chance to work, it was a fine thing this young lady was kind enough to—take an interest in me." He bowed and let his head drop effectively.

"He has a special claim on us," said Judith proudly. "His father helped build Wellington."

"He did that." Todd forgot himself in his excitement, clapped his soft grand army hat on his head and yanked it off again. "Many's the time," he took a fresh start, "I heard him tell about the pranks they played as the buildin' went up. If you find ghosts in the walls——" he chuckled, "don't blame the ghosts. They were planted there by Bill Todd and the other fellows that made fun of the women's colleges in them days."

"Did your father make fun of us?" demanded Nettie. She smiled encouragingly for the confession.

"I'm afraid he did, miss. But then I wasn't there to fight for you." This last rang out in a voice that brought forth cheers.

"Hurray! Hurrah! Hurroo!" came from Ted Guthrie's cheering squad. This was the first chance her corner had to come in on the sport, and they made the most of it.

"Yes, sir; I've always stuck up for you," said the applicant for collegiate honors. "Don't you mind when old Mat Fagan made a fuss about his cows goin' loose? The night you was playin' pranks with the fresh girls?"

"Oh, indeed we do," spoke up Dozia Dalton. She had been suffering with a "throat" and for a week previous had taken scarcely any part in the regular activities. Her usually vibrant voice cracked under the strain of this present attempt.

"Well, Mat is cranky," said Mr. Todd, "and I had some trouble in making him understand that it was all just college sport——"

"Good for you!" came again from the cheering squad. A couple of "hips" were nipped in the bud by Judith.

"Then it's agreed we'll adopt him?" she asked decisively.

"Adopt him?" scoffed Blanche Early.

"Yes, we need a man around the house," said

Jane facetiously. "And if we have a personal interest in Mr. Todd we will be able to do what is termed 'constructive work'——"

"I could that," said the man, his good natured, fat old face wrinkling up into twinkles, and sparkles that echoed from earlier beauty. Grandpa Todd was one of those human beings who mellow with age, and he must have been a good looking young man once. "I could do many's the thing in construction around here," he continued, while Jane and Judith waved away their original meaning of the term. "I could build your sidewalks and trim the hedges——"

"In fact he is a very handy man to have around," interrupted Judith. "Now, our next move is to get the Big Boss to think so. We call him the Big Boss, Grandpa, because he never seems to do anything else but boss. He won't let us so much as cut a whistle or a whip from a tree that needs trimming," she declared.

"Now, at whistles," began the embarrassed old man, "I can beat anyone makin' them." He extracted a sample from a providential pocket. "Here's one I made the other day. I sell them for a nickle," he smiled broadly. "But the youngsters quickly learn how to make them from my——"

"I'll buy your sample," offered Jane, "and perhaps we may be able to give it a Wellington patent."

Judith was rubbing one heel against the other. That indicated impatience. Nettie Brocton was actually grumbling. The others were delighted with "the show."

The man was growing more confident, and if things were not soon adjusted to the regular afternoon's proceedings, he threatened to keep his vaudevillian number going indefinitely. He did look too funny. That may have been one reason why Judith became interested in him. His clothes were a combination of overall and "Cits" (citizen) defying description and reproduction. His face wore crinkles that cracked into a grin, and his eyes shot funny blinks from under a perfect hedge of bushy brows.

Every community worthy the name has a Grandpa Todd. He usually carries the flag in the G. A. R. parade, and he publicly defends the town's traditions. He is also the best story teller in the parts, for his personality is keenly fond of fiction, if not outright fictitious.

So Judith knew how to choose a protege. Grandpa Todd promised to fulfill all requirements.

"It's agreed then," she said again. "And I'll take him up to the office."

"Up to the office?" repeated Jane incredulously.

"Certainly," replied Judith. "I don't smuggle my friends in as you do, Jane." This went over the head of most of the assemblage, but Dozia knew Judith referred to the bringing to Wellington of the babies, Joy-we and Jill.

"But you had best see the 'Big Boss' as you call him, Judy," said Jane, "and he is usually in the garage."

"Nothing of the sort," loftily. "I intend Mr. Todd shall be formally adopted, and I shall see that no detail is omitted." All this might have been a classic recitation so far as Mr. Todd was concerned. Judith's voice was rolled up in the mouthings of mystery.

"He has our vote," called out Ted Guthrie. She and her colleagues could see impending fun in the prospect.

"Thank you kindly, miss," replied the one, lone man.

"I need votes now, although I only want a chance to work. I kin work with men years younger on the calendar, but sometimes they're years older on the jobbin' docket," he chuckled.

"A fellow is as old as he feels," he added tritely, and had a good laugh at his own joke.

Just what happened when Judith took her protegee up to the office is not clear, but she came out with colors flying. Grandpa Todd was elected a member of the staff of old Wellington, with board and lodgings.

"What particular claim had he on your affections, Judy?" Jane asked when they met in their room after dinner.

"Oh, Jane; he's a dear," said the enthused Judith. "He is a baseball fan and as a story teller he cannot be beat. You should hear him recount the ball games of the past fifty years."

"But would that really influence you in his behalf?" Jane was incredulous.

"It might. We need someone to help us out. Haven't you, and I, and Doze, and a few others gone dry telling witty jokes to the undeserving and unappreciative studes? I thought you would welcome a little help on that score."

"Oh, I do," Jane was silent for a few moments. It was too easy to guess that such a foolish reason could not actually have influenced Judith.

"Was that really all, Jude?" she coaxed, presently.

"No, it was not, Jane. He is Carol Dare's

uncle, and I thought it might be handy to have him around," drawled Judith, her bright eyes failing to hide their intensity of interest.

"Carol Dare's uncle! How ever did you find that out?"

"In my interview. You mustn't think you are the only student with a bona fide case on hand," replied Judith. She curled up in the chair and tapped an idle pencil on the table. It sounded businesslike but was really a habit.

Jane laughed and tossed over a salted almond, losing the salt as it flew. "You're a fraud, as usual, Jude," she said. "Of course you would surpass me even at my own chosen profession, but you have got to admit that it was *I* who spied Social Service first."

"Oh, I am willing to concede that, girly, but *I* spied Grandpa Todd first. You cannot deny that. And just watch him grow—in popularity." Judith was fairly hugging the prospect.

"Too bad we can't use him as a baseball coach," joked Jane.

"A detective would be more in our line, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, perhaps. But what can he detect?"

"The reason for Carol Dare's interest in the Jennings family, for one thing. You see,"

Judith was serious now, "when I was directed to find who was living in a forlorn shack (we thought boys were hiding there), I came upon Mr. Todd. In asking his pedigree I found the name Dare. It touched a spot of memory, of course," Judith explained, "and I went further. Mr. Todd had come into the office as requested, and I was interviewing him there. Well Jane, when he started in to talk about his niece who, as he expressed it, was galavanting around doin' stage stunts and takin' foolish names, her own name bein' none other than plain Julia Smith, well," Judith sighed, "as I said in the beginning, or intended to say, Silas Todd was rip, roaring mad, and I was deeply interested. I then and there decided to take up the case, and although Miss Morgan would have handed it over to a more experienced worker, I induced her to let me try it."

The long speech exhausted Judith. She sighed and puffed in the exhaust. Jane wound a willing arm around her.

"Judy darlink, you're a perfect love," she declared. "Now, we will get at the bottom of the sudden slump in the Jennings' finances, for we will go at it in team work. To us this will be the Judy-Jane case, and old Grandpa Todd will be the referee——"

"He is mad enough at Julia Smith to be executioner," declared Judith. "But lots of folks work best under that sort of pressure; I believe I need it myself," she conceded, and the two chums proceeded to draw mental pictures of the two newest characters in their plot.

CHAPTER XII

DANNY MC GORRY'S HOME RUN

AMONG the duties assigned to Grandpa on the grounds of Wellington was that of caring for the new gym. It was inevitable that when he took his brushes there, at any time other than during lecture hours, girls should surround him; also it was inevitable that they should directly discover, without difficulty, his propensity for story telling, just as Judith had predicted.

A class that should have been shooting basket balls, hung over the benches on the afternoon in question.

"I told you so," said Judith. "He tells yarns like a sailor, only his sea is the ball field. I like to listen myself."

"Let's crowd in," said Dozia. "The girls are all chanting that 'Danny McGorry's Home Run' as if it were some old time melody. I'd love to hear what it's all about."

"Come along," agreed Judith, including Jane in the invitation.

In a corner of the gym Grandpa leaned upon his broom. The girls leaned upon the horses and the benches and even upon each other. He was telling the famous yarn.

"Don't let us interrupt you," begged Judith, seeing there was danger of that. "We will just slip in here——"

"Will you?" questioned Barbara Joyce, who refused to move an inch. Had she done so the bench would have sprung up like a teeter-tauter. But Jane and Judith followed the point of Dozia's finger and found a place in the far corner. Then all were happy again and Grandpa actually took a few strokes with the indolent broom.

"But you were just saying what the man said," prompted Lottie Landers.

The broom was halted, Grandpa pushed his cap back and blinked twice.

"I was," admitted Grandpa. "Well," he continued, "there was a fellow on first, one on third, and one in the field when Danny went to the bat." This he retold for the benefit of late comers. "Then this man who talked big enough to be Babe Ruth himself, he began blowin' about some one who struck a ball over a tall fence."

At this point two girls in Nettie's corner had a discussion that broke into the story. Their remarks punctured the tale, and presently Grandpa was twisting his tongue without words.

"Isn't a man on first nearest home?" asked one of the contestants.

"He is, from the wrong end," replied Grandpa. "But the fellow on third has him beaten by two," he explained. He did not laugh outright at the query, but his smile was, to say the least, comprehensive.

"Now you girls listen and stop disturbing the lecturer," called out Dozia from her perch. Her long, woolen stockings hung over the side of the step ladder and the rest of her went the entire height of it.

"Well, as I was sayin'," took up the narrator, "this dude was blowin' his head off about what a friend of his could do with a bat, and I was tryin' to find out what Danny McGorry was goin' to do with his. The game was tied. We were that excited the soda water was standin' out in the sun ready to pop off unclaimed."

"Out in the sun?" Girls will perpetually interrupt.

"Yes. You see we used to go in wagons to ball games in them days," went on the center of

attention, "and in the wagons we would carry a box of soda water and ginger ale. I know you're thinkin' we may have had somethin' stronger," he digressed, "but we didn't. The Woodsockers was every one of them sober boys."

"And handsome," whispered Judith. She poked Jane until the latter shifted out of reach of her active elbow.

"But I had best be at m' job," said Grandpa. The Big Boss will be after me." Again the broom was brought into action.

"But what happened after that?" demanded little Dorothy Scott. "The man went to the bat, you know," she pointed out.

"He did that," agreed the baseball fan. "He went to the bat," the broom was grasped and swung out with a steady hand and something of a curve, "we all stood waitin'; you have got to remember there was a man on first, two out, one on third——"

"And a rattling good fielder waitin' to grab 'em," chirped Judith.

"Exactly. Waitin' to grab em," agreed the story teller, "when Danny McGorry swung that bat. Whist! Wizz! Bang!"

"Bingo!" shouted the cheering squad.

"And that ball flew!" The broom was held

afolt, suspended in midair, and the girls' eyes were following the ball. "It flew up and out of sight!"

"Oh!!!" breathed a chorus.

"Yes sir, it went right over the barn!" came the thrilling news, "right up over a barn, big enough to stop a cyclone. Think of it! A ball batted over that barn——"

The girls broke into a cheer and Grandpa became so excited he batted the broom perilously near a window. It was his pet story and it made a "whopper" of a tale for the girls, because they wanted to cheer him up. He should not get lonely at Wellington if they knew it.

So intense was the assumed excitement that the men on base might have been all home and out on the benches before Jane interrupted.

"And they made home runs of course?" she asked.

"Did they? Well, now I'll say they did," said Grandpa, quite up to date with his phrases. "When Danny's bat touched that ball it went flyin'." What is truer than a baseball fan?

"Right over the barn," sang out Ted Guthrie, thereby starting another racket from the choristers.

"But I want to hear what happened to the

men on bases," insisted Jane. "Did they all get in safely, or was there a boy back of the barn?"

"They never found that ball," said Grandpa grandly. "And Danny McGorry was the best boy in that town for a long time after that," said the old man. "It made me feel good, because I taught that lad how to swing a bat——"

"Really? Did he get into the big league, Grandpa?" asked Lottie.

"He should have had. But he had a mother. The nicest little woman in the town and she was afraid he would get hurted——"

"Just like a woman," blamed Dozia. "See, what scientific baseball lost on account of a woman's nerves."

"But you know the fellow who was braggin'——"

"Oh, yes, what happened to him?" asked Judith, kicking two girls one with each foot.

"He took one look at the ball when it was on the wing—he stood right beside me you know—and when he saw it goin' up, and up, he grabs me own hat in the excitement and off he runs. I never seed him since——"

"Nor your hat?" asked cruel Judith.

"Oh, I didn't mind the hat. It was a straw one I had painted over, and if a shower came—

which it did every ball game day—well, he was welcome to his prize,” concluded the owner of the painted straw hat.

“The mark of Cain,” said Dozia irreverently.

“That was a great story, Grandpa,” complimented Nettie, in a wave of appreciation.

“Wasn’t it? And the way that ball flew over the barn——”

“Right up clean out of sight——”

“And the fellow who grabbed the wrong hat——”

“And Danny’s mother who wouldn’t let him join the big league,” wailed Judith, following the gasps of her companions.

“There’s the boss,” whispered Jane.

“Quick, Grandpa; hide!” commanded Dozia, pushing the excited new helper behind a pile of gym apparatus.

“Where’s Todd?” inquired the man called Boss. He had stalked in almost before Todd could follow Dozia’s advice.

“Not here?” the man answered himself, while a few heads shook in agreement. “I wanted him to go to the village. If any of you young women see him would you mind telling him I want to speak to him.”

“We wouldn’t mind telling him you would *like*

to speak to him," Judith corrected pointedly, but the verbiage went right over the Boss's head.

"He has not forgiven you for bringing the new man in, Judith," remarked Nettie, when the Boss closed the door upon himself. "I suppose he is also boss of a labor squad, with his rather insolent orders."

"Most likely," replied Jane. "But he's gone. Tell Grandpa."

"And you are to report at his office please," said Nettie, who did the telling. "And if you are going to the village, Grandpa, will you fetch me back a bag of red apples?"

Other orders were added, until the man who threatened to be called Toddy, for short, and because the girls insisted he was not old enough to be known as Grandpa, especially when his baseball proclivities were considered, finally went off toward the big garage to report to the unpopular boss.

"That was a great story," Ted said in parting. "We will have to have another tomorrow afternoon."

"All right," responded the proud old Silas, happily, entirely ignoring the task set for him with the broom.

"Let's do it for him," suggested Judith.

"With pleasure," replied Winifred Ayres, who grabbed the broom first and after waltzing around with it for a few turns, surrendered it to the next girl who did the same thing. Presently the phonograph was started, and by the time the latest dance record was finished, the room was as clean as if it had been swept to the regular strum of hardship.

"Of course this wasn't sweeping day," said Jane, servilly, "but it gave us a pretty good dose of exercise, so what's the difference?"

"Noney," answered Dozia, "except that I have just had a shampoo, the first since my throat went 'goofy,' and this dust——"

"Let's fumigate," proposed some one, and that was answered by the hose being dragged out from its place and squirted, first in a tiny stream like a spray, then the operator got careless and the water actually ran along the floor of that lovely new gymnasium, the pride of all the big buildings.

For a few moments the reverend seniors, and gay young others, forgot all about being grown up, and they had the sort of time usually enjoyed at a beach party; but it did not take them long to recover.

"My word!" gasped Judith. "Grandpa may

be blamed for this! We have got to dry up this floor. But how?"

"Sweep it," suggested Ted, who made a muddy lane with the broom to demonstrate.

"That won't do," Judith objected. "We have got to mop it. But where's the mops?" She feared the muddy floor might do more harm than bring reprimand upon the innocent head of Grandpa Todd.

There was a wild scrimmage for anything that might answer the mopping purpose, and presently a few old sweaters, and even a pair or two of last year's bloomers were dragged out from the lockers.

"Now exercise your skill," demanded Judith. "You *will* be gay and reckless, and make the Red Sea return."

"This sweater—sweats," moaned Ted. "Look at the green frog pond I'm making."

"Here, let me rinse it," suggested Jane, and she turned a stream on the spot that looked like an artificial lake in later summer after a dry spell—scummy.

The fascination of a running stream was too much to withstand. More than one spot, in fact more than many spots, appeared to need hosing, and Jane was only too anxious to oblige. So she

turned the nice little nozzle, with her finger over the spots to make it fine, in many directions. And how it did squirt!

"Look out for the mattresses!" yelled Doze. "There's a stream running right down to this one."

"Shut it off! Shut it off!" yelled an excited chorus, for a wild hose in a gym is not less dangerous than a bull in a china shop.

But no one could reach the faucet.

"Step on it! Jump on it!" called out Winifred.

Ted Guthrie tried to do both, but she slipped right in the biggest puddle and sat on it!

The things that happened then were foolish enough for a high school team to have perpetrated, but the reverend seniors and others were, after all, merely children posing as grown ups, and sometimes the pose grew irksome, and they just naturally discarded it.

What time later does not matter, but before the shades of eventide settled over the gym, it had been scoured and housecleaned as never before. The more the workers tried to curtail the scrubbing the more pools appeared, until Jane Allen declared there were secret springs under that floor.

"We'll have to wax it," declared Nettie, who lived at home in summer and knew something about floors.

"With what?" demanded Dozia.

"Butcher's wax," informed Nettie.

"Butchers?" queried Winifred.

"They use sawdust and I think it would take that to cover up this," moaned Judith. "We ought to fill the puddles in with something."

"This is our busy day," commented Ted, trying to hide the damage done her velveteen skirt by shaking, brushing and slapping it.

"And all on account of Danny McGorry's home run," recalled Jane. "The question is: where's the shine gone?"

"You did it," declared Winifred. "It was you who grabbed the hose."

"I stand and plead guilty," admitted Jane. "But what difference does that make? The mess is a mess, in spite of the perpetrator. I never would have believed a squirt of clean water could have gone into those shades. I distinctly see the outlines of Ted's brown hose. I never knew all wool would run like that."

"Lucky we saved the mattresses," reflected Judith. "I've seen less destruction after a fire. Jane, next time try something simpler."

"Here comes one of the faculty!" gasped Cora Mead. "Now what shall we do?"

"Divert her, of course," said Judith quickly. "Didn't you ever see a 'cop' divert traffic?"

"Jude to the bat," called out Jane; and that was the signal for Judith to go out and "divert" the dignified faculty member, who was headed straight on for that scene of disaster.

Instinctively a group backed to the door and held it fast. Like school children they had gone into the fun, and now they were playing up to the same juvenile type.

Meanwhile the floor was actually drying. The open windows helped, and the futuristic shades were fading from the maps of the world outlined under the very feet of the combatants.

"She's got her," whispered Cora, as Judith marched up the walk arm in arm with the deceived and innocent faculty member.

"Jude will pass the potatoes around tonight," said Jane, "see if she isn't seated directly opposite that faculty at dinner."

"Hers be the honor," ejaculated Doze. "And she's welcome. I would rather sit at the end near the—pie."

And presently the tinted floor was left to its own reflections.

CHAPTER XIII

A MOTHER'S CONFIDENCE

WE have got to make this the biggest prom we have ever had," said Nettie Brocton at the last meeting of the committee.

"Who is going to be responsible for the invitation list?" inquired Inez Wilson, loftily.

"Every member," replied Nettie. "We can't pick each other's friends and we want every girl to have her friends here. Otherwise the committees would not have been made up from all the classes."

"But suppose we get——"

"We won't," interrupted Judith. "We will get every girl's friend or friends, and whoever is eligible to Wellington, is entitled to her own following while here." Judicious Judith!

"Applause and cheers!" sang out Dozia. "Of all women's colleges this should be the most democratic. We started with a Betsy."

bolt's this afternoon," said the director of the bureau. "Mrs. Jennings has returned, and they are more upset than ever. I suppose you have seen for yourself that the case is particularly delicate and the sort we always try to bring quickly to a satisfactory finish," she explained. "It is not money those folks need, but advice. They should be made to see that being without funds is a temporary condition, and that friends and relatives should be brought to aid them—it is scarcely the work for a philanthropic organization," said Miss Morgan, kindly.

"I have felt that from the first," replied Jane, "but the more I went into it the more pathetic it seemed. To be in danger of losing their home just for the sake of some overdue notes——"

"But there are hundreds just like that," said Miss Morgan. "We can never undertake to advance money—outright."

"But what *can* we do?" asked Jane, somewhat bluntly.

"What do they propose? You know the client's own plans——"

"Oh, yes. They plan to get the money, but they don't know how," Jane answered rather ruefully.

"Well, run over and have a talk with them.

Then write up your notes and we will see if we can suggest a plan finally," continued the supervisor.

Jane was feeling discouraged. She hardly knew how to approach her friends again without being prepared to answer their financial questions. But Mrs. Jennings should be interviewed. Jane wondered if the interview were ever to be the keystone of her new course.

She found the young widow most pleasant and attractive. In her sombre black her bright, vivid youth seemed to sparkle, like something shining against a jetty background.

"I am really much embarrassed," said Mrs. Jennings. "I had no idea mother was going to—apply——"

"You seem to consider us so—official," Jane interrupted. She sought to discount the professional lines and place the matter into those of friendship.

"I am sure you are very kind," continued Mrs. Jennings, "but we have never before had any such experience. I have heard how generous you were to little Jill and Joy during my absence." This somewhat lessened her reserve.

"It was just fun," said Jane, determined to break through further. "I had a wonderful time

with them, and my friends were actually jealous of the chance I had at playing mother."

Mrs. Jennings smiled. When she did, Jane discovered a charm in her expression easy to associate with stage talent. She had flashing brown eyes and dark hair, was tall and so slender. Jane regarded her as the embodiment of perfection in appearance. So many of the college girls were trying to get just that slim, with walking, exercising and dieting.

"You are very young to be in such work," said the widow gently. She was too well bred to show any resentment did she actually feel it.

"When one becomes a reverend senior," replied Jane, "age is negative. It must fit any demand put upon it. But really, I do so enjoy this course—perhaps I would not, had I to take on all sorts of experiences." This was a tactful compliment, Jane considered.

"It's nice of you to say so," replied the other. "But I fancy you will want to show results." She shrugged her shoulders. "I cannot imagine anyone being able to make headway in this tangle." Her eyes dropped disconsolately.

The conversation was being held in the small reception room and no one, but Mrs. Jennings and Jane, was present. In explanation of this,

Mrs. Jennings said her mother and aunt had gone out for a drive with a friend, taking the children along. This made the entire interview difficult for Jane. All the previous understandings were naturally lost sight of. The children, however, seemed to offer a safe opening for conversation.

"And the babies did not suffer from their wild night at Wellington?" asked Jane, cautiously.

"They have never stopped talking about it," replied the mother. "I cannot imagine you girls caring for them in your room."

"You should have seen us," exclaimed Jane with unusual warmth. "My chum, Judith Stearns, is too funny—she can make a good time out of almost any emergency." This was not at all the line of conversation she had rehearsed, but how could she ask this little woman about her private affairs? Social Service just then seemed a misnomer. The young woman was young indeed, and Jane, regarding her, could easily imagine what a bride she must have been a few years before. And now to have to start all over again!

"I believe our families are old friends," said Jane, after an awkward pause. "My father and your uncle were in the same mining company."

"So I believe," replied Mrs. Jennings. "But

uncle is rather estranged from us now. He simply abhors the stage."

"Do you like it?"

"Oh, I love it," glowed the young widow. "But it is not easy to get a chance at it. I have had some experience, and rather good preparation, but when it comes to being cast——" She stopped and dropped her eyes. "Well, it always seems as if the old hands are in demand, and the new must wait."

"I understand," said Jane, feeling very foolish. The one fortunate circumstance to this inane interview was that it was solitary. Had Judith Stearns, or Dozia Dalton a chance to "listen in" they would have howled at the dismal failure Jane was making of it all.

She stood up to leave. "I had hoped to have a word with your mother," she said timidly, feeling the dark eyes boring through her, "but I don't think I should wait longer." Jane noticed the face before her change its expression.

"Miss Allen, I know you are trying to be kind," said Mrs. Jennings impulsively, "but no one can help us. We have got to get some money privately, and I have been the unfortunate means of using up what we had." She arose to draw down a shade that was admitting a shaft of sun-

light. "I had no idea, really, that I could not quickly replace the money, and in fact I expected to add considerable to it; but you see this acting is a rather precarious profession, and mother did not warn me how important it was to have money before the legal claims became due."

"Were you disappointed in your trip?" Jane was encouraged to ask.

The young woman bit her lips and shifted uneasily. Jane was almost sorry she had asked so direct a question. Then she smiled and the reserve was broken.

"I trusted a friend," she said, "but who can one trust in business?"

"Oh well," soothed Jane, "you have undoubtedly added to your experience. But as a Social Service worker," she laughed a little, "I am not supposed to condone conditions that interrupt the normal life of little children. A mother seems to be the most wanted creature in all creation, and no matter how kind and efficient a friend or substitute may be, we are directed to keep the children with the mother, always or almost always."

"Indeed my mother is much better than I am with the babies," insisted Mrs. Jennings. "Of course they are mine, and I love them dearly, but

I have not the slightest fear of leaving them with mother. That particular day it was unfortunate she should have been taken ill, but even then see how well she managed to get you to help her."

"I can easily understand your reliance," said Jane, "and I only made that statement out of loyalty. As a matter of fact, I am sure Mrs. Castbolt is a wonderful mother, and I can easily see why you should trust her implicitly."

"That is exactly the trouble. She has always been so wonderful we have all leaned on her too heavily. Her health is failing and we cannot realize it," said the daughter, with a show of anxiety. "But I am going to see my brother and get him to give up college. We simply cannot lose this home. Of course, he does not know our funds have shrunk. You see, I took what was out aside for the note and paid it for the stage experience. Now I have—neither." Her fine features hardened pitifully with this thought.

"But you are not serious in saying you are going to ask your brother to give up college?" Jane asked anxiously.

"There is nothing else to do. We certainly cannot ask for charity."

What a bitter word that was! No wonder,

Jane thought, it has been transposed lately to other softer expressions under Social Service.

"But don't you think your uncle would help? I have been wanting to see him. He is such a friend of dad's——"

"But he is so stubborn," interrupted Mrs. Jennings. "My brother was always a favorite of his until he played with his college club. You see Uncle Reynolds has a prejudice. His wife, at one time, favored the stage."

"And the experience has embittered him," reflected Jane aloud. "Don't you think, Mrs. Jennings, he might listen to me on account of dad?"

"You are very far from the stage type—I mean you are so frankly a girl," Mrs. Jennings hurried to explain. "I am almost sure Uncle Reynolds would be civil to you. But you see, there is so little ground to work upon. We should not have been in such straits."

"The old reliable adage that blood is thicker than water ought to have weight with your uncle," said Jane, tritely. "But if I could see him——"

"No doubt you would be able to invent your story," supplied the other. "Well, I would do almost anything other than ask Renny to leave

his class. He is such a fine boy," and the sister's eyes sparkled with sentiment now.

"Your uncle's office is in New Bayard I have heard. That is only a few miles out and I can drive there with a girl friend. Would you be positively opposed to my trying to influence him?" asked Jane, eagerly. She quickly followed with: "I am sure he owes it to your mother——"

"Oh, it is only mother I am thinking of," said the daughter sadly. "She has had so much trouble, and if this comes——"

"It won't," said Jane decisively. She was by no means as confident as she professed to be, but she knew that inspiration would be best imparted with confidence. She continued: "Now, Mrs. Jennings, suppose you and I just act like two college chums. You are so short a time away you can easily imagine yourself back——"

"But such a lot has happened——" Her eyes blinked.

"Making you more of a woman but no less of a girl," said Jane with haphazard eloquence. "Now, just let me go see this ogre——" she made a twisted face in excuse for the assumption. "And I will tell him about those babies. Does he know what dears they are?"

"No."

"Then I will use that as an opening wedge. You have no idea, Mrs. Jennings, how green I am. But you see, dad mentioned your family, and I want to please him by accomplishing something." Her humility was not assumed.

"I wish you luck," said the other dryly. "Uncle Reynolds is not exactly a—gallant."

"I like them that way," declared Jane, feeling elated now that she had been able to obtain some footing. "I am afraid of no man who claims to be a woman hater."

"They usually are—putty," admitted Mrs. Jennings with a smile. "I should like you to meet my brother," she broke off without warning. "He is a perfectly splendid fellow."

"I am sure he is. But don't tell him I am meddling, please. I can just imagine how he would hate me if he knew the profession I have chosen," Jane argued.

"He is a sensible chap," defended the sister, "and if I had only taken something sensible in *my* last year at college, I suppose I would not find myself so helpless now."

"Would you like Social Service?" asked Jane suddenly.

"To practice on ourselves?" the young woman asked with a shrug of her shoulders. A bitter-

ness could not be disguised in her attempt to hide it.

"Oh, this is not really a 'case'," declared Jane. "I am just trying to keep myself out of mischief. You should see what my chum is doing! She has actually made us adopt a grandfather," laughed Jane.

"Adopt a grandfather?"

"Yes. I don't think it will be betraying confidence to mention his name. In fact Judy brought him right in, and we formally adopted him. Do you know a man they call Grandpa Todd?"

"Of course I do. You don't mean to say you have taken *him* into Wellington?"

"Indeed we have, bag and baggage," declared Jane. "And I must say I admire Judith's courage. He is quite an acquisition."

"He is—Carol Dare's uncle," said the other slowly and evenly.

"I believe so," said Jane simply.

"Do you know her?"

"Only by reputation. She is something of an agent for theatrical folks, isn't she?"

"She professes to be." Again that bitter tone sounded as if it had been spoken from behind the footlights. "But I have good reason to doubt

her claims," said the young widow. "It was to her I entrusted our precious—wealth."

"Really?" Jane did not feel like betraying the confidence given her by Mrs. Castbolt. "If she is in a good position I shall have to tell Judy to get after her. That will be another uncle to work on, only the process will be reversed," said Jane, happily.

"If anyone can get Carol Dare to do anything for a person other than herself she will indeed be—clever," declared Mrs. Jennings sharply.

"We can only try," said Jane. "One of our tenets is to have relatives do their part to help those in distress. Why not Carol Dare?"

CHAPTER XIV.

A DANCE WITHIN A DANCE

THE "prom" came next. Excitement and interest were so co-mingled as to be synonymous, and if there was a girl in Wellington who was not eager for that great night, it must have been she who had no new party dress.

There really were a few such. But even these Cinderellas had their compensations, for this being a real benefit for the Fund (what college has not a fund running?) opportunity was given for serving on committees that carried about trays of flowers, or handed around sandwiches, or even served lemonade from a Rebecca's well, and to take part in such service required a simple costume provided by the general committee. So it was that more than one girl had a rollicking good time even without the proverbial party dress.

Bobbie and Shirley, the two sophs who were such prominent freshies the year before, were helpless in their excitement. Teddy, Shirley's

popular and good looking brother, was to be Jane's escort, and while the sister hoped for some of his attention she was proud that so popular a girl as Jane should have chosen her brother as her partner.

Judith was going with Mason Blair, whose name suggested the Toot-Toot he was commonly known by. Not that a Blair always toots, but any noise is a band to a college girl. Dozia had not made known her intentions but everybody hoped for Phil, even the girl who was "Hoped Chested" by proxy on his account.

So the "prom" promised to outdo its predecessors, and the fact that gentlemen were now permitted to come to Wellington and take part in the big social affairs, gave the zest that goes to make any affair interesting.

Nettie Brocton was more nervous than the other students because this was her first attempt at handling a real function, and while all classes were participating, she felt the responsibility as chairman, and knew that the student governing body looked to her to make the "prom" a real affair.

"You can't tell a thing about it until the dancing starts, or, in fact, until it is well along," she confided to Inez Wilson. "I asked to have all the

returns in advance, but that is only air. They who dance will pay, none others," she declared, sagely.

But earlier than usual the big auditorium was filling up, and as "side shows were barred" according to previous orders, it was easy to calculate that the assemblage was a splendid testimonial to the comradeship of old Wellington.

"A lot of strangers here," remarked Winifred. She had been secretary to the committee and fancied the writing of names might intimate the personality of the owners.

"A wonderful crowd," replied Inez. "I guess Nettie won't have anything to worry about when the count is made up."

Fluttering hearts, and flushed cheeks, and dancing eyes must be seen to be appreciated, and there was an attractive display of all these on the slippery floor of the auditorium when the orchestra broke into its harmony. As for gowns, it would have been difficult to decide which was most effective; the simple white daisy kind or the flashing and brilliant golds, reds, greens, and other stolen floral tones. Perhaps each required each to bring out in fullness the satisfying effects of both.

Jane was verdant in two shades of leaf green,

Judith glowed in a glorious American beauty satin, the sheen of which sent out flashes worthy of the title, Dozia wore black and looked queenly in it, while Nettie dimpled, appropriately, in a spangled net.

The two sophs, Bobbie and Sally, fairly exhaled the joy of the undergrad; Sally in variegated golds and Bobbie in changeable blues. The *Tellit* reporter was bewildered with the task before her, for a description of the "prom" should, ethically, contain a description of the gowns.

See the *Tellit*, page one, double headed display for a full account, and if your favorite student is not listed there communicate with the editor. She should be. The "prom" was entirely comprehensive, took in all classes and barred sorority restrictions along with the side shows.

At intermission the special number was introduced. That this was to be a Grecian Dance done by two professionals was no secret, still, an air of expectation pervaded the room when the floor was finally cleared.

The premonitory mumble of ancient music stirred; then the dancers swept in like a gale of rhythmic motion. The Greek maid was being tossed around by the Greek "god," in that modern manner peculiar to interpretative dancing, but to

the audience it represented marvellous skill in escaping mortal injury. How he caught her just as she flew, and how he swirled her like a pin wheel, then tossed her up in the air and caught her upon the return bounce!

"Nimble and nifty," remarked Judith, who sat on a window ledge that was low enough to be used decorously by a reverend senior.

"Real dancers," agreed Jane, watching the young giant perform the double feat of showing grace with skill in acrobatic swirls, performed in such a subtle manner as to leave spectators wondering whether the Greek dancers of old were really made up with the same number of bones and joints that moderns are encumbered with.

An encore brought the dancers back, and they varied their number with poses and statuesque "stills" that should have made Mercury feel the necessity of taking lessons in aviation.

It was while making a "still" that Jane had an opportunity to penetrate the make-up of the "goddess," and behind it she discovered features vaguely familiar.

"I have seen her before," she whispered to Judith. "Where, I wonder?"

"But the man. He with those eyes, those mouth!" Judith was gasping in ecstasy and

breathing hard. The young man was undoubtedly handsome, and no makeup could cover the classic outline of his features; so even Judith's foolishness might have been pardoned.

"But I know the girl!" exclaimed Jane in Judith's ear. "She is Carol Dare!"

"Really!"

"I am positive."

"Then we can meet the man——"

"Judith!"

"Why not? Isn't he charming? That's a weak word. He is inspiring——"

"Now, Judith," Jane was attempting to be calm but her discovery left her obviously agitated.

"Don't you want to meet him?"

"I am just wondering whether I want to meet *her*."

"I would rather not," said Judith. "She might ask me to return her grandfather—or is he her uncle?"

The dancers were bowing and otherwise acknowledging the generous applause. Now they were capering off to the dressing rooms.

"Shall I ask them to stay?" Nettie Brocton wanted to know. She had corralled a group of seniors in which Jane and Judith were included.

"Oh, of course!" exhaled Judith.

"Why not?" demanded Winifred.

"What's his name?" begged Judith.

"I haven't heard. She made the arrangements," replied the flushed chairman. "All right, I'll send them an invitation to stay and finish the dance with us. Norma will be delighted. This is her find, you know."

"Don't forget me," sang out Judith.

"Get me a couple," appealed Winifred.

"Give the Greek lady over to your—boy, Doze. He looks kind of sad. Knows you preferred Phil," teased Ted Guthrie.

"Whatever you do don't let the Greek lady claim Apollo. I shall never forgive you——"

But Nettie was gone on ahead of the threat.

A flutter of excitement went through the assemblage when a half hour later the dancers appeared with rather uncertain complexions, but otherwise wearing their normal expressions. The young woman known to Jane, and perhaps a few others as Carol Dare, wore a most effective black costume, so simple as to be extravagant, and so Grecian! Around her head was the band she had worn in the last pose, and when she stepped out to dance with some one introduced by the committee, not a few youths neglected their own partners to stare after her.

"Some pippin," said the young fellow who came with Teddy Duncan. Ted was then coming up to claim Jane.

"But oh, the man!" gasped Judith, pretending exquisite anguish at the very thought.

"Shall I bring him up?" asked the accommodating Ted.

"Oh, would you?" sighed Judith, waving off the protest of Mason Blair, her own escort.

But when Ted went to the other end of the room the Greek youth was just about to take a partner out on the floor, and Ted returned empty handed, so to speak.

"The next," he promised, with one of his most ingratiating smiles for the pretending Judith.

"Then I shall have to fall back on Toots," she said, but Toots knew she did not exactly mean that, not that alone, at any rate.

Jane and Ted swept off into the dancing throng.

"Do you know him?" she asked. "All the girls will be sure to make a foolish fuss over him, of course," she continued, swaying into step, unerringly.

"No, I don't know him, but I have met—the lady," admitted Ted rather uncertainly.

"She is Miss Dare, is she not?"

"The same. Does up all colleges with her wonderful shill at raking in the shekles," continued the youth. "Not but what she is a first-class performer, but what I have reference to is her business tact. Once she takes it into her bobbed head to give a turn she does it, so I've been told," explained Ted Duncan, brother to the famous little Shirley.

"She is her own press agent?"

"And business manager rolled into one. She danced at Locton the other night, but this chap was not with her, and her partner rather fumbled the ball. Makes all the difference in the world who is the other fellow in an act like that," said Ted, seriously.

"I fancy it would," replied Jane. "Suppose he should fumble her, when she makes one of those high dives?"

"Ker-plunk, I'll say," continued Jane's partner.

"I did enjoy the exhibition, however," remarked Jane. She was wondering if it would be to her advantage to meet Carol Dare under the present circumstances. The next thought erased this idea, for why should Jane bring Social Service into the prom?

The dance ended and was encored. As no

"cut-ins" were allowed the same partners glided off again. A few more turns and the encore was over. Then the usual rush toward the punch bowl swept Jane and her partner along with it.

Carol Dare was chatting, smiling and otherwise acting up to the admiring multitude of youths—the girls may have admired but not quite as frankly as did their escorts. It was evident she was in her glory. Judith whispered this to Nettie. The other Greek dancer had slipped off somewhere, and not even the most searching eyes (Judith's and Dozia's) could locate him.

"You promised," Judith reminded Ted Duncan, referring to his promise to bring back the dancer.

"Oh, I'll bring him back if I have to drag him," said the young man who was filling Jane's cup with "blushing lemonade."

"I'll wait my love," ejaculated the fun loving Judith. "Others may pine in secret, but why should I?" she opined.

"Why, I ask you?" repeated Ted, in comedy tones.

"Thinking?" whispered Judith in Jane's ear. "Going to confront the—crea-chure!"

"I am thinking, but I think not," replied Jane.

Both understood, but others nearby could not possibly guess the riddle.

"There he is. I see him!" said Inez in an undertone to Judith. All the party were now either sitting or standing about a settee under palms—the palms that had cost the decorating committee a full day's begging from one of the local florists, it having been a matter of "getting in touch," with the owner, and there having been any number of persons about the place who positively disowned the shop when the girls went there to beg.

"Now, I'll nab him," announced the redoubtable Ted. He was himself such an attractive fellow it behooved him to give someone else a chance, even though the other party might be a Grecian "god."

The girls held their breath audibly. Jane was flushed a pretty pink and Judith was getting a shade too deep for contrast with her rose colored gown. Doze—well, she didn't exactly pretend to be interested (Phil's absence was chilling), but a pucker at the left end of her shapely mouth might have been easily interpreted.

Ted Duncan was returning and this time beside him was the popular youth. There was no mistake he was good looking. No wonder Judith

had gone into a rhapsody of "Those eyes, those mouth" ejaculations.

Now he was being presented. Ted Duncan purposely introduced Jane first.

"Miss Allen," he began formally, "let me present Mr. Reynolds Castbolt," he said, and at the name Jane could not suppress a gasp.

"Mr. Castbolt!" she repeated, but in the word there was more than the mere acceptance of an introduction.

Standing before her, handsome, debonaire and a veritable idol among the throng that had just witnessed his artistic dancing, was the young man, the "handsome young man" of Judith's dreams and her own especial Social Service case! Mrs. Jennings's brother, the son of the dear Mrs. Castbolt, and now the dancing partner of Carol Dare!

No wonder Judith, who had quickly recognized the name, allowed her jaw to drop in sheer astonishment.

He smiled as the introduction was passed on to the others, but Jane fancied, she may have only fancied, that he had recognized her own name.

CHAPTER XV

THIN ICE

GLANCING up questioningly at that handsome face, noting this young man's splendid, natural grace and easy cultured manner, Jane's heart thumped.

How could she presume to interfere in the affairs of one so seemingly capable? She, a mere college girl, with no experience other than good will and frank interest?

"May we?" he asked simply, in making the usual dance question.

Jane looked at Ted. "Oh, go ahead," said the good natured Ted. "I don't mind a—tall," and he made a mockery of the statement with a most melancholy grimace.

Then Jane and the dancer glided off while Judith managed to send a shaft of accusation after her.

But it was the new partner with whom Jane was concerned. Suppose he should ask her about her visits to his mother!

"I enjoyed your dance very much," she said at once, feeling as she did so the inanity of that terse speech. But it would, she hoped, start a safe conversation.

"I am glad it did not bore you," he replied. "Sometimes one just feels that everything is—well——" he laughed boyishly. He had no intention of whining, evidently.

"Don't you like to dance?" asked Jane.

"Oh, yes; this way," he replied, and the perfection of his step was a joy to Jane, as well it might have been to any fortunate partner.

"But you did those dances so wonderfully."

"Oh, so so. Lots of the fellows do them, but they only perform for fun," he parried. The remark was unexpected and Jane felt it was offered as an explanation. *He* was evidently doing it for money.

Miss Dare swirled by and gave him a glance that Jane caught as she turned. It might have been imagination, but Jane thought she felt the hand holding hers twitch. Then, as if to account for the pressure, Mr. Castbolt attempted to adjust his watch-guard before again taking Jane's hand. Nevertheless, she could not but notice the momentary pause, and then his own sudden realization of it.

"I think this is a great college," he said politely. "I have often heard the boys tell of their wonderful times here, but now I know why."

"We try to have successful proms," said Jane. "As a matter of fact we have to. There is always the—fund."

"Isn't there?" he replied. "Funds are perpetually running down and having to be run up. I hate them myself."

Judith went by and said something pleasant. It didn't matter just what she said, her eyes always twinkled merrily, and she could manage to give them their way even while she danced.

"She's lively," remarked Jane's partner.

"Yes. She's my chum. Has been all through college. I wouldn't know how to breathe without Judith Stearn's approval."

"Stearns?"

"Yes. She's studying——" Jane just caught herself in time. She was going to say that Judith was studying Social Service with her.

"Specializing?" asked Mr. Castbolt, with polite interest.

"Yes." Jane wanted to say in what branch, but could not bring herself to mention the work that involved this proud, young student of another college. It was very awkward.

"I will soon be through," he said. "That is if I stick."

"You wouldn't leave without your degree?"

"I wouldn't except—well, you see I am the only man in a large family," he laughed.

"Oh, I see," said Jane. If she did not make known her acquaintance with his family would he think her—deceitful or ashamed of her field work? She wondered, and was ill at ease.

She almost wished this dance had not been hers. It was getting uncomfortably personal. But as a dance it was perfect, and all the girls were looking on enviously. Jane was human enough to enjoy the situation in that respect. She sighed unconsciously.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "Not really sighing! Isn't this all right?"

"Oh, perfectly," said Jane with embarrassment. "I have a habit of sighing. Perhaps thinking of tomorrow," she atoned.

"I might echo yours," he said, as a boy will who wants to make pretty speeches at dances.

Both laughed. The dance was almost ended. It would be encored, as usual.

"Like to sit it out?" suggested Mr. Castbolt, when the dancers came to a standstill.

"I don't mind. Perhaps you would like to look

around," said Jane. The next moment she realized this was unwise. The little nooks and pretty spots, made so attractive for the "between dances," were the very circumstances to be avoided if general conversation were to be kept up.

But she took his arm and sauntered bravely over to the old time Dell, that corner dear to the heart of more than one student who found "sitting it out" much pleasanter than continued dancing.

"It seems to me," said Mr. Castbolt, "I have heard mother mention a Miss Allen of Wellington. Can you possibly be she?"

Jane's face flared. She picked up a dance card that lay upon the small table, and did other trifling things to hide her embarrassment.

"Oh yes," she faltered with too elaborate carelessness. "I have called upon your mother, and I have met those darling little ones, Joy and Jill." This she felt might erect a safety isle upon which conversation could be securely launched.

"They are wonderful—kids," he said, colorlessly.

"And Mrs. Jennings is such a girl to——" She paused. He looked his question.

"I was going to say how very young she was

to be left without her husband," said Jane. Each word seemed to choke her. If only Judith would come.

"But Mabel is a good sport," spoke up the brother. "Things are a little off form now, but they'll be all right presently. Mother worries a lot. I suppose all mothers do," he finished, evenly.

"I have often wondered what my own would have done with a girl like me," said Jane.

"Yours has gone?" he asked, carefully.

"Yes, but I have a darling little aunt, who puts up with me usually," said Jane, trying to shake off the sudden seriousness. "You see, my dad knows your—family."

"Really?" There was genuine surprise in his question.

"Yes; that's why I called upon your mother."

"Oh, I see." This time he sighed in perfectly obvious relief, that is, if young men do sigh. Perhaps it was just a little mannerism and not really anything so effeminate as a sigh, after all. But the smile was real—that could not be mistaken. He was smiling broadly, and there came Judith now with a flock of others. Jane was genuinely glad to see them, and when Mr. Reynolds Castbolt stood up more than one girl tried to flop

down in the vacant spot. And how they did stare at Jane?

"Weary?" asked Judith, foolishly.

"No, merely interested," smiled the stranger. "But I have to make a train, I am afraid," he continued. "I have had a wonderful time," he included Ted Duncan in this word of thanks, "and I hope you will call on me at Locton some time, Mr. Duncan. I can't ask the girls——"

"But if we are passing——" threatened Judith.

"Or if we should have tire trouble at your corner," said Dozia.

"Oh, I could fix you up for any little thing like that," replied the young man whose face still showed some of the bronze color of that Grecian dancer. He was bowing and making his adieux, just as Miss Dare came through the alcove. She was with a number of men, and one shared his arm with her.

"Oh Renny!" she said in the most affected way, "I am afraid we shall miss that train."

"No, plenty of time," returned the addressed Renny. "I was just coming to you." He glanced at his watch.

After that it was a matter of the one party disentangling itself from the other. The special guests were heaped with compliments, Miss Dare

by the boys and, naturally, Mr. Castbolt by the girls.

Everybody had enjoyed their dancing, and everybody hoped they would come again, and there was the chairman waiting to see that they were properly conveyed to the station, and there was Jane Allen speechless when Renny Castbolt shook hands with her!

After they had left, the prom seemed flat for a while. Not that many other interesting couples were not there, and not that many students had not as many gallant young fellows waiting to dance, to compliment, and to do all the other nice things done at college dances, but perhaps it was because the central group had taken a sudden interest in Mr. Castbolt.

"Now Jane Allen," began Judith, who was expected to begin things, she always acted as a self starter, "what have you to say for yourself?"

"Why, I have had a perfectly glorious time," replied Jane lightly, ignoring the inference.

"I know that. But the question is—wasn't I supposed to have a dance with Apollo?"

"He didn't mention it," said Jane.

"And what's more" (Judith was bantering in her own peculiar way), "there's Ted Duncan. Ted, give me your hand. There's this young man

who is a perfectly good and reliable partner, left alone, on the floor, asleep at the switch, you might say——”

“And he wept all over my shoulder, didn’t you Ted?” asked Dozia.

“Not all over it. Just in one nice little puddle,” said Ted, winking at Jane.

“Why, I thought he wanted particularly to dance with his nice young sister,” put in Jane. “It was under that condition that Shirley let me have him.”

“All good enough for you to say,” kept on Judith, “but wait, just wait until you want me to do something for you—hanging on to him all evening!”

“What about your own Toots?” asked Jane. “I didn’t see you hanging on to him all the evening.”

“Toots is so anxious for my happiness,” said Judith, “he hoped ardently that Apollo would show me a few fancy steps. Well, any way that’s that. Now let’s try what we can do to make up for lost time,” and she all but grabbed the in-offensive “Toots” and swirled off before the others had opportunity to know that another dance was being played.

Ted Duncan reclaimed his lost partner. “I

did give little sister a turn," he said. "She and her friend Bobbie are having a great time."

"Yes, they are as happy as any girls in Wellington," replied Jane, glad to be able to revert to an ordinary subject. It had been something of a strain to talk to Mr. Castbolt in such a meaningless way, when the meaning was only hidden under the thinnest and most transparent ice. The sort that melts quickest.

"She still blesses you," remarked the brother, in a boy's way of complimenting one supposed to be above ordinary mortals.

"Oh, I have had to neglect them shamefully this year," Jane declared. "You see, this new course takes up so much time."

"I fancy so. But I just wonder why that fine chap goes out dancing with—a professional," Ted said suddenly, digressing.

"They make a splendid pair," replied Jane, evasively.

"I don't think so. She is lots older and so much more—oh, I don't know just what it is, but it seems to me she has a sort of hold on his attention, and yet he is not exactly attentive." This was said in a simple, straightforward way, merely betraying one young man's interest in a fellow student. He was puzzled, not critical.

"I suppose," ventured Jane, "he may have good use for the money." She hated to say this but it was the only excuse she could lay hold of and she had to say something.

"Oh, of course," the tone was apologetic. "It's just what I should have thought, considering I was in the same boat myself last year." This was a delicate reference to the straits Ted Duncan found himself in when, at the beginning of the previous year, his sister Shirley had done so much to help him in college. "He's a wonderfully fine chap," he added warmly.

"Yes, I happen to know his family," continued Jane, "and they are all splendid folks—friends of dad's," she explained eagerly.

After that it was just prom. Jane and Judith and all the others continued to dance, to accept compliments, and to be politely appreciative; but the real interest went out with the two Greek dancers.

Nettie Brocton said frankly she would never again introduce a novelty.

"It went to your heads," she declared when the dance was finally all over but putting out the lights.

CHAPTER XVI

DAWN AND REFLECTIONS

YOU'RE not sleeping, girl; what's wrong?"

"Oh, nothing. Guess the dance went to *my* head."

"Guess again. Is it that Carol Dare young woman, Jane?"

"Not exactly, but partly." Jane was not offering any encouragement to Judith. Sleep might be passing by and take fright.

"Well, I think your Renny is the very nicest chap I have met in ages. But, of course, they always are nice when they take to the stage. That's what takes them to it," said the persistent Judith.

"Do you know it is almost daylight?" Jane demanded.

"Who cares? No classes tomorrow, and if I should get sleepy—well, I'll make it uncomfortable for anyone who tries to wake me up, that's all," announced Judith.

"Talking is my worst enemy when sleep is on the other side of the line," said Jane. "I suppose I should get in a few winks." A hint to Judith.

"But you won't if you don't first try to talk it off. I know that much about psychology—don't suppress. Now tell me all about it. I am not a wink sleepy," coaxed Judith.

"Nothing to tell," insisted Jane.

"'Course there is. Did your case get a set back? Having both the client and the foil present—you might say. Rather complicated."

"Carol Dare cannot foil me," spoke up Jane louder than in the whisper strain used previously. "I don't intend to do any more about the case. It's absurd."

"Jane Allen! Do you mean to tell Judy Stearns you are going to let a mere, clever dancer outwit you? Why, she only came here to scare you out of it. I heard Nett and Norma say she applied for the engagement and was positively eager to get it. Of course they didn't know that her dancing partner lived around here, and that his mother—was a friend of yours," parried Judith.

"Did she really ask for the chance to perform?"

"Ask for it? She insisted on getting it. Nett and Norma had no idea of having her when along

she comes and tells all the wonderful things she can do to music. She completely swept the committee off their feet, and was engaged, and the papers signed before the poor little girls could turn round. It was successful enough—but she did monopolize the boys while she stayed. I am not saying anything about the Renny boy monopolizing you,” teased the curious one.

“Indeed he seemed to want to avoid the crowd,” said Jane seriously. “I had no idea of taking him over in the corner——”

“It was perfectly all right, dearie,” drawled Judith. “I did want to dance with him, just to show some of the others how well I can dance—professionally, but it’s all right, Janie. Don’t let that keep you awake.”

“I have no idea of worrying about any dance incident, Jude, but I am worried about the case. Seriously, I intend to drop it.”

“Go to sleep, girl, and sleep it off. You are morbid from nerves,” said Judith, half tauntingly. “I know you will think differently in the real morning—this is only an imitation morning, but if you don’t get blinking real soon, the real thing will be here before you know it, and it is horrid to get up with the same smirk and the same cast of countenance you went to bed with. ’Tis

deadly to beauty. Here goes." Sounds of the "going" corroborated the threat.

A turn over that could be heard across the room testified further to Judith's determination. A heavy breath—followed by a few more taken in sequence, gave rather too mechanical an effort to be really natural or enjoyable. But for a time neither girl spoke.

During this period, what Judith thought was unimportant, except as it related to Jane's special problem, but what Jane was thinking made a web of circumstances interesting in detail.

What a night it had been! After trying to keep her Social Service work entirely out of the pleasant affair, Jane reflected, it had been forced upon the prom like a shadow with sinister influence.

And now Judith said the dancer had personally and deliberately sought out the engagement; an agent usually attends to such things. That would agree with Ted Duncan's opinion, that she tried to get in at all local college dances, yet it seems, somehow, she was most deliberate in her attitude toward Wellington.

And Judith was now warning Jane not to let this professional woman discourage her. Following that line of thought came the reminder of

Mrs. Jennings' remarks, that Carol Dare had used her money to obtain a position which was not actually obtained. Or was it Mrs. Castbolt who had said that?

The wee small hours are not very particular in choosing their brain pictures, and those now flashing across the mental plate of Jane's mind were so confused as to be exciting.

Sleep! It seemed as far away as the hills.

"Hey, there, Jinks!" whispered Judith, "Did your nice, young man say anything leading? I mean did he—know who you were?"

"He said he had heard his mother speak of a—Miss 'Allen.'"

"So," sighed Judith. "Well, did he invite you to call again or offer any little civility of that sort?"

"Don't be silly, Jude. I merely said his family and ours were acquainted." Jane retorted.

"What a lovely alibi!" Judith was silent again. But the mere stopping of words did not mean silence so far as thought went. Both girls were simply vibrating wide-awakefulness.

"He's lovely," said Judith.

"So's Ted," said Jane, loyally.

"And Toots," said Judith, falling back into rectitude.

"Lots of them," added Jane, indifferently.

"Didn't Doze look wonderful in that majestic gown?"

"She always does, in any gown."

"All in all, I think it was the best affair we have had in a very long time," reflected Judith, with a threatening yawn.

"I have been at dances where I have had a better time," objected Jane, "but I don't seem to remember any more exciting. When I found out that the dancer was Miss Dare——"

"And when I found out that the other dancer was Renny——"

A double chuckle followed this. The girls were still far from sleep. A stirring in the outdoor world, that indefinable motion that seems to start the world going every morning, and which one can never catalogue, was now creeping in.

"Shall we get up or subside?" asked Jane, chattering a little.

"I would like to know just one thing, Janie," answered her chum. "What do you intend to do? Are you going to give up trying to help those lovely folks out of trouble, just because the boy is good looking?"

"Nonsense, Judy; looks have nothing to do

with it. But he is perfectly capable and quite talented. Also, he has a most businesslike dancing partner, so why on earth should I interfere in his affairs?" demanded Jane fitfully.

"You are putty—all balled up at that," said Judith with some impatience. "Can't you see that woman has him twisted around her businesslike finger? He is not doing that dance stunt for the sport of it——"

"I do believe that," Jane interrupted, "for he said something about disliking it, or that other fellows did it just for fun——"

"Meaning that he does it for money. Why Janie! Isn't it splendid of him to try to help his folks out with the money he earns at these affairs?"

Jane acquiesced. She knew this to be true, and while it appeared he was perfectly content to go about and do Grecian dances with Carol Dare, perhaps he hated it.

"Well," she sighed, "as I feel now I shall not go any further in the affairs of the Castbolts. You know dad would be willing to forward the money for this mortgage, but the rich uncle would never forgive him. Besides, I cannot suggest that through Social Service. It would be making a dangerous precedent."

"Oh, I know all about that," mumbled Judith. "I wanted to buy shoes and things for my little vagrants, and Miss Morgan almost expelled me."

"But Judith——"

"My own true name. Why?"

"I am serious."

"I feared it."

"Do you want to hear?"

"Dying to."

Jane laughed. Judith was always so absurdly jolly. She could hardly be brought to the point of taking any matter seriously. Jane shifted about and did not attempt to have further conversation.

"Well, proceed," urged Judith after a pause. "Why get me all keyed up and then drop me cold?"

"Judith, I was going to see the rich uncle; you know. Had it all planned. But now, since I have seen this young man, it makes me feel foolish even to think of asking favors for him," she finished with a sigh.

"Because you undervalue your own power," insisted Judith. "Don't you know, girl, boys never can ask for anything? Poor fellows! It's hard to be a boy and have to stand alone all the time. Girls have a much easier time of it,

always permitted to beg their way out of anything, or even crawl, if need be."

"There is something in that," admitted Jane. "I have found that girls like you and me miss something the clinging vine enjoys, and I suppose that is more true as regards girls and boys in the same sort of comparison."

"Now you are talking common sense," chirped Judith. "It seems to me that Renny Castbolt is trying to dance on ahead of a very aristocratic wolf that threatens to prowl. He had a sort of sad look around his mouth, I thought."

"Not as bad as that, Judy," Jane said with another half sigh. "But he should not be forced to leave college, of course."

"And this crea-chure at his heels! That's your cue, Jane. Keep him at college and get him away from Carol Dare. He's only a boy," argued Judith, "and a boy is so much younger than a girl when it comes to understanding designing women folks."

"Well——"

"Then you won't drop the case?" Judith was sitting up so that her head rested upon her hand and in that position she could see now, in the early morning light, the girl on the opposite side of the room.

"If I thought——"

"Didn't you promise Mrs. Jennings something?"

"She is so indefinite," answered Jane. "Although she did admit things looked pretty badly and expressed real anxiety on her mother's account. This spell of sickness was alarming, and any additional anxiety——"

"There!" exclaimed Judith. "That's even more urgent a reason why you should stick to your guns. Just imagine that house being sold over their heads, and Mrs. Castbolt——"

"I couldn't let it go so far as that, Social Service or no Social Service," declared Jane suddenly. "I simply could not stand that," she reiterated.

"I don't know whether the office would prevent an actual sale or not," added Judith reflectively. "After all, we are rather young at this, and maybe all our anxiety is unnecessary. The organization may come to the rescue."

"Oh, no. They cannot pay off mortgages. The patrons and benefactors would not think that good service. They must show the needy ones how to get out of the straits and not drag them out bodily," Jane explained. "But it is rather nerve racking when a few hundred dollars means

so much." Again her voice fell into dismay.

"A few hundred? I thought they had to have fifteen hundred by the first of next month?" said Judith.

"We could get the note renewed upon payment," said Jane. "But can you imagine Mrs. Jennings taking the money and wasting it on some agency? That is the curious thing."

"Of course I can. The lure of quick money does that often," declared Judith. "Besides, when folks have stage talent, as I told you before, they never seem to have any sense," she ended in a trite manner. It all seemed so useless, and the hour was not opportune for such discussion.

Finally both girls settled down to woo sleep. They would be sure to be "dead tired" next day, if this kept up. More noises outside made positive a waking world. The rumble of a wagon and the lilt of a boy's whistle gave consciousness to the allegory of Day's Return.

"Judith," said Jane a few minutes later, very slowly and deliberately, "do you think Renny Castbolt is in love—with—Carol—Dare?"

"I—do—not!" said Judith emphatically.

"Because if I thought he was, I should never interfere with family affairs again. How do *we*

know but that he may even *want* to leave college?"

"Raving, Jane, raving. He wants money. That's all he wants, and I am sure he is a perfectly cracker-jack student; he may yet build a bridge over Mars, if you just hold out and save him from that Carol Dare. I can see it, just as perfectly as if I had a life sized painting in front of me, with an arc light aimed at it. Carol Dare is after Renny Castbolt, and I wouldn't be surprised but it might be a first rate plan for you to go in and——"

"Judith Stearns! Will you be sensible," interrupted Jane, a little testily. "I don't mind helping as far as I can under the rules, but I positively decline to get personal."

Which was a pretty speech so far as it went.

CHAPTER XVII

INTERFERENCE

JUDITH was almost in tears. She burst in upon Jane and Dozia who were "plugging" at a neglected lesson.

"He's going!" she exclaimed.

"Who?" asked Dozia, managing to speak while Jane was attempting to do so.

"Grandpa Todd!" Judith's words had the knell of disaster in their tone.

"Going where?" asked Jane this time.

"Away. It's all on account of that horrid woman," moaned Judith.

"Judy, be calm," urged Dozia. "We can guess some things, but it is hard to penetrate your system. What is this all about, pray tell?"

Judith sank down as if she regretted the limitations of a mere chair. Her weight, as she dropped it, might have gone much further.

"Carol Dare has undermined Grandpa. She came in here somehow or sent someone to coax

him off. Now, he's going," sighed the temperamental Judith.

"Well, what's so melancholy about that?" asked Dozia. "I thought he was a sort of charge of yours?"

"He was—sort—of," conceded the gloomy girl. "But I wanted to keep him here for another purpose. He could help us, perhaps, to an understanding of that adroit niece of his." She drew her lips into a line not exactly becoming.

"Don't worry about that, Jude," soothed Jane. "I can almost assure you we will have no further need to go into the case you have reference to. Doze agrees with me, it is too complicated for a mere senior. It requires an expert."

Judith jumped up. "I don't believe you mean that, Janie," she burst out. "Any one can handle a case of a house burned down and the children in the streets, or a widow trying to live on precarious suit-case washes for irresponsible students, or even the boys I have, who will run away from school in spite of my lolly-pop parties, but it takes a very different sort of worker to handle a delicate case. She must have a heart—that's what is needed in a case like yours, Jane," she finished, more eloquently than she knew.

"Sum'thin' in thet!" "lispered" Dozia.

"And I have found out one thing that supports my theory," went on Judith earnestly. "Carol Dare is trying to get Renny Castbolt to leave college. I am positive of that."

"Trying to get him to leave? How?" inquired Jane.

"That's part of your case," returned Judith. "I told you it was not money these folks needed; the problem is to get them away from that designing woman—pry them loose if necessary. When you get to the bottom of your investigation, Jane, you will find she is there and all over it." Judith spoke as if she had just heard so many things about Carol Dare she would not or could not attempt to voice them. She was fairly heaving with pent up excitement.

"Where've you been at?" asked Dozia, who, not being in Social Service, still professed frivolity toward it.

"Grandpa called on me just after dinner. He was all dressed up but nervous! Fingering an imaginary stiff collar and all that," said Judith. "He acted positively guilty."

"Like they do in the movies," interrupted Dozia.

"Worse than that," declared Judith. "If he

could have flushed with excitement he would surely have done so, but I guess they don't change shades at his age," she attempted to qualify.

"Had Miss Dare been to see him?" asked Jane.

"Sent for him—she was too cowardly to come in here. That or she was afraid of me," declared Judith. "Well, he almost wept on my shoulder only he made it my hand, and he told me—he was leavin'." Judith imitated the accent and attempted to imitate the speaking voice of Grandpa Todd, and she did not do so badly at it either.

"But where's the thrill?" demanded Dozia. "I have to finish this theme before—next year, you know."

"Proceed. No one is stopping you," retorted Judith. "I just felt like expressing my indignation—had no idea of interrupting a cramming match." She turned away in righteous scorn.

"You didn't, dear," soothed Jane. "Doze is always impatient, you know. Take your time," she coaxed. "What did Grandpa say about leaving?"

"It was what he did *not* say that worries me," replied Judith, restored to her usual good nature, that she, for the moment, had pretended to be separated from. "He acted so nervous——"

"Going housekeeping, perhaps," hazarded Dozia. "That's the usual symptom. They always fidget."

"Housekeeping? For Carol Dare?" glared Judith.

"Does his family consist of one?" inquired Dozia, tranquilly.

"There may be others but I have not been able to discover them," replied Judith. "The fact is, Carol Dare predominates and dominates everybody and everything she lays her hands on. There, I had Granpa all fixed for life, and she comes along and drags him off. You know, girls, at his age, being taken into Wellington, he would never want again!" said Judith wisely.

"That's perfectly true," agreed Jane. "And, as you say, Judith, it is a shame to disturb our pleasant, old friend from this happy home."

"And just as soon as the Dare lady gets what she wants—I mean as soon as she accomplishes her purpose,—then, of course, poor, old Grandpa may come back again and beg his way into Wellington!" said Judith with bitterness.

"That looks about it," agreed Dozia, complacently.

"I wonder how she knew he was here?" remarked Jane.

"Oh, she has friends within our ranks," replied Judith. "She made good use of her time while she was here at the dance. More than a few girls are rather priding themselves on knowing her personally."

"I hope she does not try recruiting here for her theatrical ventures," Jane interrupted. "I believe, Judith, we ought to do something to offset a possible move of that kind. There are always a lot of impressionables in a big place like ours, you know."

"I can't worry about that," replied Judith. "I have enough to do now to fret over dear old Grandpa Todd. And the girls had a birthday shower fixed up for him," she sighed. "He told that old story about Danny McGorry's home run over and over again, and they enjoyed it so, they wanted to do something for him. They had a wonderful time all fixed up for his birthday next week."

"How did they get the date?" queried the indifferent Dozia.

"That's one of his stock sayings, he will be so old at a certain time," explained Judith. "However shall I tell them he has deserted?"

"Bring him back for the party," suggested Jane.

Judith sort of sniffed. It was plain she was bothered even more than she admitted. Jane guessed this was because Judith had depended upon the old man to help out in the Castbolt case. Not that any definite plan had been arranged for him, but in that subtle way girls have a habit of expecting, Judith did expect something from Grandpa Todd.

Dozia went back to her papers. Jane applied one eye to her book and kept the other shifting to Judith's face. Judith was so plainly uneasy, that while no nervousness could ever possibly be ascribed to one of her sturdy type, she was, to say the least, fidgety.

She jumped up suddenly. "I guess I'll run over and have a chat with Ted's crowd," she said. "They are still talking about the dance; it might be a charity to divert them."

"Brilliant thought," drolled Dozia. "Give them my love and tell Norma I'd love to have my golf clubs back. She has had them for days, and meanwhile I'm growing stiff in the joints." She stretched out a couple to demonstrate, but they did not seem altogether stiff.

Judith wended her way down the corridor while Jane and Dozia fell back to their tasks.

"There's no way to stop one from leaving a

good home when you get it for them, is there, Jane?" asked Dozia, as if she felt the line of thought that was filtering through her companion's brain.

"Oh, no. They are free to come and go, but we would not take up a case again if the applicant was unwilling to follow our advice," said Jane.

"Well, if the old gentleman leaves, will you cast him off?"

"The organization would likely oblige' him to look out for himself if he left a place like this of his own accord," Jane continued. "But we know, although we cannot say so outright, that this niece of his has influenced him and perhaps offered strong inducements."

"She may be really going to give him a home," suggested Dozia. She too had taken a liking to the old man, with his funny stories and his almost childish affections for Home Runs. And Dozia had a heart, withal.

"I can't imagine that," replied Jane. "She doesn't seem to have a home of her own, and I know she all but broke up another. Dozia," said Jane suddenly, closing her book and speaking in a voice that brought her companion up attentively, "do you think that young fellow, Renny Castbolt, who danced with Carol Dare, acted as

if—well, as if he was having a good time? I mean——” she faltered, feeling her friend might break out into ridicule at such a question, “do you think he showed any especial interest in his—partner?”

“If anyone else on earth asked that question, Jane——”

“Oh, yes, I know it sounds silly,” interrupted Jane, “but I have been confronted with a new difficulty in the case of his family since that prom. I feel I should not attempt to interfere with the affairs of a family in which so capable a young man as Renny Castbolt is nominally the head.”

“But he’s not a wage earner,” objected Dozia.

“No, not exactly. He does earn something at these dances, but he is at college, you know,” Jane went on.

“So I understand,” replied Dozia. She checked a smile and dropped her face to the degree of sincerity. “Just what do you want to know Janie?” she said kindly.

“I want to know whether I should go after the other cases of families that are waiting for some attention, for lack of field workers, or whether I should stick to this and work out an answer somehow? You know the big problem is to get

their folks to come to their aid, and so allow this young man to remain at college," Jane continued. "Since the prom I have been more than tempted to go in for the ordinary cases. I assure you there is a stack of them waiting. Miss Morgan asked me to investigate two tomorrow morning. Want to go down on the railroad district with me?"

"I don't mind if you just want me as a body guard," said her companion, "but don't expect me to do any interviewing. I would turn my pockets inside out and spoil all your golden standards," declared the untrained one. "But as regards the other case, I would certainly hold on to it. I believe Judy Stearns knows more about Carol Dare than she is publishing."

"She's keen on having the case adjusted," reflected Jane, "and I suppose this interference with Grandpa Todd will just add fury to her purpose."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE INVASION

THE girls mourned the loss of Grandpa Todd. They had planned so many pleasures for him, considering him their especial adopted protege, and with the holidays in sight, what would they not do to make the man of their collegiate choice and of the Home Run memories, happy?

But being just Wellington girls it was not too difficult for them to adjust their interests, and that "youth will be served" was their motto without their own knowledge of it being so.

Even Judith seemed to shake off the mantle of worry with remarkable ease. True, she did speak of the old man, and threatened to spoil Carol Dare's plans, but no one knew just how she intended to do it.

It was late in November and the season had been so wrapped up in special interests as to all but obscure Wellington as a unit. Classes had their functions, basketball and other sports were

carried on with the usual vim, big games brought big crowds, but the one absorbing interest of Jane and Judith was that of their chosen, special course: Social Service. It was like living in an outside world and sleeping in college, so intense was the interest in the human problem offered through their field work.

One afternoon when the campus was alive with young girls emerging from lecture rooms and "labs" or other temples of light, a racket—it could be classified as nothing else—broke in upon the feminine laughter and girlish calls.

"What ever on earth——" began Barbara Joyce.

"Look!" shouted Winifred Ayres.

The girls on the tennis courts, who had been taking whatever sort of open air exercise the deserted court afforded, stood like a flock of birds staring at the winding path from the big gateway.

"It's Judy Stearns!" announced Inez Wilson, "and her rag-a-muffins!"

"A band!" declared Shirley Duncan. "Oh, Judy has a band!" and she promptly broke ranks to get a better view of the noise makers.

"Look at the pee—rade!" called out Velma Sigsbee.

They looked, and saw a regular parade with brass band and noise implements.

Judith was leading, and in her wake marched a procession of youngsters obviously her "Hookey Boys," as she called the truants that came under her inspection in Social Service.

What a racket! How could a few amateur dishpans and homemade horns make that much noise?

On they marched and loudly they drummed and fided; Judith waving her hands above her head and above other heads that happened to come within her waving radius.

The girls came running from all parts of the campus. Quickly they joined in the fun and when the procession came to the tennis court, those near by stepped into the ranks and helped make more Bedlam.

It was a parade now of no amateur grade. The boys, delighted with their reception, blew tin horns and drummed their dish pans, and one little fellow actually sported a real drum; no doubt a relic of the previous Christmas. Flags too were much in evidence, the color bearer leading directly after Judith, looking neither to right nor left, but keeping up the regulation mien as befitted a champion of Old Glory.

"Where are we going?" asked Velma. She managed to tap a small, tin pail that was carried just ahead of her, and she marched along with the tread of a veteran.

"Goin' t' see th' college," replied a lad that held up the strap supporting another boy's dishpan.

Up and on they marched, and not a girl that shouted nor one that called, swerved Judith from her lofty purpose—whatever that might be.

There must have been a dozen urchins in the parade and they made noise enough to be three dozen strong. It was a glorious afternoon and the crisp, fall air added lusty zest to the pageant. As they passed Lenox Hall a party of freshmen joined in, and if anyone had a rollicking good time it was surely the freshies. At another turn a group of English Lit. students fell in, and with them Jane Allen skipped into marching step.

Many parades had traversed the grounds of old Wellington, but it is safe to say, this was the most novel.

"The Hookeys," said Jane to the inquiring girls, for Judith herself would not deign to notice a mere student.

In imitation of cornet Jane did something

between a whistle and a squeal, but it went well and fitted in beautifully with the harmony scheme.

"Where do we go from here?" demanded Janet Clark. But the turn they made in the road answered her. They were bound for the big kitchen door of Madison.

"Thur—umn! thur-umn! Thut—umn-m-m-m dum—dum!" intoned the kettles, the pans and the youngsters.

"A ruba-dub-dub! A rub-a-dud dub thurr-ruba-dub-rub-a-dub-a-dub!!"

"Halt!" shouted Judith, and they halted.

"Attention!" They attended, although there was some untoward shuffling in Jane's line. Dozia was her partner which explains the discrepancy.

"Miss Brocton!" called Judith. "Ask the kitchen maids to come out and feed the troops."

A roll of the drums approved. Also there was a mumble of voices a little off pitch.

Laura the faithful, she who fed the babies Jill and Joy, now entered upon the scene. She held in her capable hands a tray or was it a pan of brown and white twisted cakes—doughnuts—the regular war kind that made one organization famous.

"Go over on the benches," Laura ordered, "and I'll pass them around."

"Here boys!" shouted Judith. "Don't dare plunder. The first boy who grabs will be court martialed."

The youngsters may not have been positive what that term implied, but they knew it was something awful, and thereupon they fell back into their respective places.

Presently the girls succeeded in seating the parade under the big trees, that were nearest the buildings, and so offered quite a comfortable rendezvous for the troop.

The most partial reporter could not have said that the boys were orderly, in fact they almost upset Laura and her doughnuts more than once, and even went so far as to snap a few of the sugary cakes from those "fellers" smaller and more timid than the spoilers; but taking it all in all, it was a pretty good showing for Judith's first attempt at drill, and by the time the eager girls had fetched drinks of milk and one pot of chocolate (it was dinner stuff but no matter), and the doughnut platter was replenished and the lads likewise, the party had already gone into history as a complete success.

The chef came out to bear witness. He was a

jolly looking host, indeed, in his big white apron and his funny square cap. His face testified to the splendid hot meals Wellingtons were erst-while treated to, and he laughed happily at the youngsters as they ate his and other fellows' doughnuts.

The excitement drew another crowd. They came from faculty rooms, and laboratories, and such remote temples of deep thought always peopled by the supporters of higher education, no matter what attraction called elsewhere.

The boys were unmindful of their spectators, however. A treat in the process of consumption is all absorbing, even to the powdered sugar that frosted faces, grimy but happy.

"He's got mine, missus!" yelled a lusty chap, taking a sprint and a jab at the entire line so as not to miss the alleged culprit.

"Naw I aint!" shrieked the accused one. "He's got his pockets full."

"Y'u lie——"

"Here! Here!" shouted Judith, horrified that the melee might warm up to a real boxing match. "Sit down and I'll get you another one, Jake, take your elbow out of Caly's mouth."

"He's allus pushin'," growled Caly.

"Aw g'wan! Y'u poor little shrimp——"

"See here!" said Judith sharply. "If you can't behave you can't have any—eats. Now that—goes!"

The fight was over. Caly and Jake smiled wisely at each other, and Jake may have winked. Their companions approved expressively but required no words to do so. They knew. Everyone seemed to know. The only persons not fully aware were the members of the faculty. They still looked on with a puzzled stare.

"Here you go," announced Laura, at the risk of her platter, for no sooner had she given the word than they went—in all directions.

"They must have been starved," said Miss Thompson, innocently.

"They always are," replied Judith, but the information went right over the prof's head. She still wondered.

Jane and her chums were helping, not to serve but to conserve.

"How many pockets have you, Shaver?" she asked one of the smallest rebels.

He felt all the soft bumps surrounding him. Then he smiled: "I kin use me hat."

Jane gasped. His pockets were full and there were so many of them, but—"he could use his hat!"

"I wouldn't," she told him seriously. "You might catch cold. The sugar is damp."

"Aw right," agreed the shaver, putting the hat on a head nature must have delivered at the wrong house. It was a handsome head, and the hair was curly, and the color was glorious—a perfect copper brown. If the fortunate little owner was ever going to catch up with the head it was evident he had best get at the task.

"Wherever did you find these children, Judith?" asked Miss Eaton, in her silvery voice.

"They compose my Hookey squad," said Judith. "I am training them for self government—the honor system and all that, you know. Here Sam," she broke off, "leave Phil alone. I thought you all promised to behave if I brought you up here. I have your word of honor——"

"Sure!" sang back a leader. "We's only foolin'."

"Quit!" ordered a big fellow, the biggest of them all. "I'll help you to keep order Miss Stearns," he volunteered.

"Yes, y'u will!" came the retort, affirmative in words and negative in tones.

"They certainly need training," remarked Miss Chambers. "I never saw such forlorn little creatures."

"Forlorn!" repeated Judith. "They're too lively, that's their principal trouble. (You could not make them forlorn with an earthquake. They'd love it," she finished, and irrepressible boyhood evidently had few terrors for Judith Stearns.

"What's the great scheme?" asked Dozia. "Are we adopting them in lieu of Grandpa?"

"They are here to observe," said Judith loftily. "We have had all sorts of students and others looking over our plant, why not the youngsters who will enjoy it most, and who need it most?"

"Good for you, Jude," sang out Ted Guthrie. "We haven't had such a jolly crowd since the prom. I'll help show them around. Just you give me a detachment."

The doughnuts had gone, even to the powdered sugar frosting that had so recently softened the ruddy cheeks—to put it prettily. Realizing there was no hope for more, the visitors stood and showed signs of moving on—somewhere.

"Keep your seats!" called Judith. "I have to give orders."

"Yes'm," lisped the boy with the handsome head.

"Shut up!" hissed Jake into the ear next to him, and while the exclamation was rough and its

tone explosive, Jake really was trying to help Judith out.

"Now remember what I told you about going through the buildings," began the worthy chief. "You must not put your hands on things, you must not kick the woodwork, and you must not scratch with pencils or knives, nor sticks——"

"Where would they get them?" asked Jane, aside.

"They're always armed," replied Judith while the boys pretended to be concentrating upon her orders.

There was some speculating among the faculty present, but Judith answered all objections with the assurance of her previously arranged permission with those "higher up," so when the seniors, and a few from the juniors and freshmen, took the party into custody, two Wellingtons being assigned to each four boys, the party and procession got under way again.

"We'll show them the museum first," said Judith. "Then we'll take them over to the gym. But don't mention the swimming pool," she cautioned. "I want them to get back to their parents alive."

CHAPTER XIX

HOOKEY BOYS

MANY sight-seeing parties had gone through the grounds and buildings of Wellington at various times, but surely none had been more interested nor more interesting than Judith's Hookey Boys.

She called them by that name affectionately. They did, occasionally, play what is termed "Hookey," truant being too mild a name for their exploits, and it was the thought of giving them something worth while seeing, and the hope that such a sight as the great college with its imposing structures, and its magnificent campus, would awaken inspiration in the small offenders from village schools, that Judith conceived the idea of taking the party out to her Wellington.

But even so brave a chief as she had reason now to doubt the wisdom of the plan, for what one boy did not think of another would guess at in the way of perpetrating the unexpected,

and asking the unanswerable, during the exploration.

Dozia and her clan were in their happiest element. She was towing the two reddest heads of the entire contingent, and with that shade of hair went, naturally, the sparkling disposition, topped off with blue eyes and complete sets of perfectly matched freckles.

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" begged Ted Guthrie, for her party was getting too far ahead of her to be within bounds. Ted being fat she was not sprinting, whereas the boys in her care were scampering over the laboratory like some new kind of bug dodging test.

"Don't let them touch things," warned Judith, now fully conscious of the measure of the task she had undertaken and thrust upon her friends. "They would just as soon drink acid as spring water," she murmured, weakly.

"Better get them out of here," warned Jane. "There are so many safer places——"

"Come along children!" called Judith, as quietly as a call could be effectively given. "There's a place a lot nicer than this for you to see."

"Let's try this—just this once," begged Jake.

"Oh no, we have no more time here," insisted

Judith. "Don't you want to see the gymnasium?"

"The gim-a-naz-sium?" asked Jake eagerly. "Sure I kin punch a bag——"

"So kin I." Fists went out in corroboration and the glass jars and fragile tubes on nearby tables just then ran the greatest risk of their useful careers.

It was like getting children home from an excursion to get those youngsters out of the lab, and knowing this, Judith began to wonder just what would happen at the gym.

Someone touched a jar with a stick and the glass rang out like a bell.

"Who had that stick?" demanded Jane. "Didn't we tell you boys, you were not to bring a single thing in here with you?"

"That's his drum stick," scoffed a loyal companion, for the culprit was none other than the very best dishpan drummer in the homemade band.

"But we told you to leave your band things over on the bench," persisted Jane. "Here, give me that stick, I'll give it back to you when you are starting home."

Reluctantly, indeed, did Benny part with the drum stick, but it was as dangerous as a shot gun in those surroundings.

Teachers, professors, and English students were following the horde with pencil and note books. But it is one thing to hear juvenile English, fresh from Nature's most perfect product, The Boy, and it is quite another thing to reduce such gems of emotional language to lettered words. It could not be done, the students of sidewalk utterance gave up in despair before the gym was even reached.

"I hope it will do them good," remarked Winifred, who was hanging on to a precarious coat that dragged away from her with such force she felt like a child playing horse as she struggled after it.

"It will," Judith assured her and others. "These little fellows are considered the worst in three schools, but since I've been working with them I haven't seen them do anything half as bad as—our own belligerents here might be tempted to do."

"Thanks," came from Norma. But everyone understood Judith's comparison.

What a time they had in the gym! No need for explaining things there, but there was need for alarm. Climbing rings, vaulting horses, swinging clubs and punching bags!

The more timid of the Wellingtons fled out-

right. Such shouting, such yelling and such Bedlam!

Jane, Judith and Dozia stuck to their guns, literally, which invited sprinting, and ducking, and otherwise escaping personal injury in more ways than have, as yet, been made known to the science of indoor or outdoor sports.

"Look!" begged Jane.

She was pointing to a midget on a ring, and if a fly had happened to cross the ceiling the midget surely would have flopped.

"We had better get out the fire nets," proposed Dozia. "I can see disaster right now. Look at the human moth batting its life out on the side wall." She pointed to a blue blouse flapping in midair, as its owner traveled the rings from the highest point to the farthest corner.

Shouts of triumph and approval marked the exhibition. It certainly was a great show, and the performers were too delighted to know what caution or restraint could possibly have meant.

"They've just got to work it off, that's all," said Judith with a sad show of resignation.

"Work it off? They are just getting warmed up," declared Jane. "Here go the ones who were afraid a moment ago."

"Get the nets," begged Winifred. "It would

be dreadful to have to take that little fellow up on a dustpan."

"However are we going to get them down?" asked Jane. "We can't stay here all night. It is getting dark now."

"Think of something," entreated Judith.

"I am," Jane assured her. "But it isn't feasible. I am thinking of ice cream."

"A treat! That might do it," exclaimed the perplexed leader. "Do you suppose there are any more cookies?"

"I don't," replied Dozia cruelly, "but we could give them a shower."

"A shower?"

"Ye-ah, pennies you know, like they do in Hawaii."

"*That* would be demoralizing," objected Winifred, just dodging a swing from Jake's right.

"*This* will be fatal," retorted Jane, likewise ducking a lively blow. It landed on a boy's ear and sent him after his assailant with all the combativeness his entire family had ever bestowed upon him, added to the quantity he had been storing up individually in his ten crowded years.

A fight followed. Tumbling over and upon each other and upon one another, a ball of motion

rolled around that gym like some animated army tank. They dropped from rings, horses and other apparatus to join in the melee.

"My sainted uncle!" exclaimed Dozia irreverently. "Shall I call the—perlice?"

"No," said Judith, "the thing to do is to count and make them hear the tally, when they may take their corners. The only thing is sport."

"Hey listen!" shouted a group taking the cue given by Judith.

"You can't strike a fellow when he's down," yelled Dozia.

But the ball still rolled.

"Mercy! They'll really hurt him," moaned Winifred.

"Wouldn't wonder a bit," responded Judith. If she had had weaker nerves she never would have held out in this sort of work.

"The phonograph!" was Jane's inspiration; and no sooner had the first martial strains of "Beat Him To It" penetrated that din, than the ball dissolved, and a crowd of happy, roguish youngsters flocked over to the musical corner, and the boy who had been under the ball merely rubbed a bruised eye and gave out a twisted smile of victory.

After that it was not so complicated. That

"music hath charms to soothe the savage breast" was never more truly uttered, and even the shower of pennies proposed by Dozia could scarcely have been more effective than the unleashed tune.

"Please go out and get their band equipment," begged Judith. "I have got to get them in line while this is—popular."

A trio of girls responded to the call to arms, and when they returned, the dishpans and other instruments were distributed.

To the phonograph's feeble tune the band joined in, but even a change of needle and a complete winding did not give the boxed music a chance. It was all band.

"What next?" asked Jane, into Judith's ear.

"March!" shouted the valiant leader; and strange as it may seem to a mere amateur, those boys fell into line, and into step, and without the slightest objection they marched around that gym like little veterans.

"Hurrah!" shouted the cheering squad, with Norma leading.

Responding to the applause the marchers did their noblest, and when Judith reach the door her conspirators guided the visitors out like sheep going to be shorn.

Once out on the grounds their hostess breathed a sigh of relief.

"Now, we must count heads," she announced, and thereupon began that task.

"Where's Lem?" called out a black haired boy, who even in the coming darkness sounded black—his voice was so husky.

"Where—is—he?" repeated Judith.

"He was wid us in the church," declared someone.

"The church?" Judith questioned.

"He means the Hall," explained Nettie. "What did he look like?"

"Description fails me," replied Judith, "but I have got to find him. Suppose he slipped down somewhere or got locked in——"

"He didn't," Jane interrupted. "He is around here. Let me go back and look the gymnasium over."

"Maybe he is injured," suggested that foolish little Violet Nairn.

No one took the trouble to deny or affirm her "maybe."

A hunt necessarily followed. As it progressed, the students lost courage at every turn, but no one admitted the weakness.

The boys were scarcely alarmed. It merely

added to their adventures, and they had plenty of energy left to look for Lem.

All the building had to be gone over, all the tunnels gone under, and here in the "cloisters" the boys called again to hear the echo that now sounded ominously in the ears of the frightened Wellingtons.

"The kitchen," suggested Dozia. "He may have become hungry."

But Laura had not seen anyone since the contingent left en masse. Almost in despair Judith was preparing to take the boys back to the big bus that had brought them in, when a shout from Jake gave the glad tidings.

"Here he is!"

And he was.

"Lem!" accused Judith. "Where were you?"

"Lookin' fer dem," said Lem.

"What?" asked Judith.

"His specks."

"Whose?"

"Grandad's," he mumbled.

"He means Grandpa Todd's," said some one who appeared to know.

"He said he left dem on de—winder——"

"Do you mean that Grandpa Todd asked you to look for something?" Jane inquired.

"Yes'm."

"Where is he?" asked Judith, now more interested in news from "Toddy" than in the boy's safe return.

"He's at our house," replied the lad not any too merrily.

"He got fired from here, didn't he," asked the indelicate Jake.

"He did not," retorted Dozia. "And if he is staying in town we will have to go in to see him tomorrow."

"Some 'un said he got fired," Jake persisted.

"Didn't either," snorted Lem. "He's just waitin' fer th' railroad to build a new track."

"An' boardin' at your hotel," scoffed Jake.

"Good as your'n," retorted Lem.

"Ye'ah, it is; y'u know it—'t isn't——"

"Right about face there!" ordered Judith. "That bus driver will go off without us if we do not pile in quickly." And when the last urchin swung into the step, Mike the driver, whipped up the horses and away went Judith's Hookey Boys.

And the Wellington girls had news from Grandpa Todd!

CHAPTER XX

PLANS PRECIPITATED

I'M going after him, Jane. I feel dear, old Grandpa is in trouble."

"Do you know that family he is supposed to be with?" Jane asked.

"I know they must certainly have enough to do to feed themselves," replied Judith. "The little fellow who went looking for the specs only stays away from school when he is out of shoes. I fetched a few of the boys to the party who are not really in the truant class. You see, they were all crazy to come."

"I should imagine so," said Jane, "and I wouldn't wonder if they would be crazy to come again. They seemed to have a perfectly wonderful time. I rather envy you your line of social action, Jude. I think it's a lot more interesting than mine is."

"Only in spots, Janie. And I am sure yours will presently assume an aspect of intense interest. Just you wait until I come back from

interviewing Grandpa this afternoon. I am as sure as shootin' that Carol Dare lured him off to get him away from our influence. Now, just as I expected, he is left high, and no doubt—dry."

"Do you think she would put him to board in the village?" Jane asked. "I can't see what advantage that would give her over leaving him here."

"I don't believe she put him to board anywhere," snapped Judith. "But there is no use speculating. We can't tell a thing about it until we hear his story. Then, Janie, I'll tell you and you will see it has some bearing on your case. I have always maintained that anything Carol Dare touches she dominates. Now wait, just wait until we see why she abducted our nice, old Grandpa," Judith advised.

Jane agreed. She was perfectly willing to wait for anything that would make her case actively interesting.

"I can now understand how monotony kills inspiration," she said. "The very sameness of this Castbolt affair makes me hate it."

"Hate it! Janie Allen!"

"Well, I do," declared Jane. "It's the proverbial circle without end or beginning——"

"You're morbid," suggested Judith. "That's

your conscience. It is prompting you to go see the rich uncle. How much more time on that note?"

"Not much," replied the bright haired girl, turning away to hide the frown that went with the statement.

"And what are you going to do about it?" asked Judith, bluntly.

"I don't know——"

"Of course you do," contradicted Judith. "You are going out tomorrow morning to see the big, cross, old uncle, who has money to throw away and has a temper to peg after it. Did Miss Morgan say she would give the matter over to—that new Miss Traymore, if you dropped it?"

"No, she merely laughed at me when I suggested it," said Jane. "I insisted I could go no farther, and she informed me calmly, that all new workers felt like that directly before the climax."

"There! Didn't I tell you it was coming?" boomed Judith. "Maybe our lovely Renny will call——"

"Judith, how absurd! Renny is probably out dancing with Carol the Light Foot."

"And the Sly Eyed," added Judith. "Well Jane, I feel just as Miss Morgan does, that your case is about to come to—a head."

"And here we part," remarked Jane affectionately, as she took the walk to the gray building where the English lecture would presently be given, and Judith continued on, over the paths and down the steep slope that would bring her up to the college store where she proposed to buy a sheath of paper, whereupon to write up her notes of the truant party. It would make a wonderful report, she was reasonably assured.

The nearness of the holiday season was in the air. Students were concentrating upon their tasks and excluding the usual sportive interruptions that had been toyed with, while the vision of home was too distant to allow it to play and possibly influence college morale.

Christmas soon!

That meant a clearing of the scholastic plate and the polishing of a fresh mind and heart for the great, welcome holiday.

Yet Jane was almost unhappy. She had gone out to see Mrs. Castbolt but once since the eventful prom, and then her interview was interrupted by a neighbor's call. Mrs. Jennings was off again—somewhere, and the babies were visiting also "somewhere," so that altogether Jane felt she had done little or nothing towards a piece of constructive family-case work.

A letter from her father added to the gloom. He wanted to know all about "his friends" and if Jane were going to "give them a Christmas party or something."

No wonder the handling of charity cases required experts, Jane was reflecting. She had taken all the advice available, gone through the usual investigating step by step, and yet——

It was at that thought she halted. Even in her lecture hall, listening to a voice that sent forth the gems of literature, Jane was disturbed by the thought that she had not followed the one direct solution: she had not gone to see Mr. Webster, the rich, reluctant uncle.

And she was forced to admit that this was because she was too proud to let Mr. Renny Castbolt know that she would attempt to interfere with his family affairs. Pride was her stumbling block.

"His family affairs," she was repeating. "Are they really his?"

Again, in honesty, she had to admit this was not the real cause of her indecision. Rather she disdained to fend with a young woman like Carol Dare.

Not even to Judith would Jane admit this truth. She preferred to avoid any possible con-

nection with the professional dancer, and she knew perfectly well, that when the mysterious end of the string would be traced it would be found wound around Carol Dare's businesslike finger, figuratively speaking.

The day wore on and when the hour came for reporting at Miss Morgan's office for an assignment on field work, Jane's face was, as Judith said, "at half mast."

"Come along, honey, and help me this afternoon," proposed the loyal friend, who knowing Jane's high spiritedness, also knew that she was nervously debating her problem. "I have more to do than is healthy for me, and I would be mighty glad to wish a few of the Hill cases on you. They take me into such forlorn places," Judith elucidated.

"I promised to take up a little emergency work this afternoon," replied Jane, "otherwise Judy, I would be glad to help you. How many more hours of this field work do we have to do? I have lost count."

"Quite a few," deplored Judith. "But honestly, Jane, I am so attached to my boys I shall be sorry to give them up. Don't you think them the most honest little villains alive?"

"Certainly they are outspoken, if that's what

you mean by honesty," Jane replied. "But they did crib doughnuts, Judy," she teased, with just the phantom of a smile and a half-hearted titter.

"That's part of their honesty," retorted Judith. "They do it in public and have nothing to hide. Others pick pockets and cash drawers, but my boys merely pick nice, fresh doughnuts, right out in the open. But do come along," she begged. "I have six pairs of shoes to O.K. and the school people insist that the bureau give shoes on Friday, so as not to take the children away from class, to try them on. The youngsters expect a holiday with every pair of shoes, you know, but we have to draw a line, with Christmas in the offing."

Crossing through the "Cloister," thus taking a short cut to the roadway, the two seniors saw a figure just coming into the campus. As no other persons happened to be on the path the lone pedestrian attracted their attention.

"That looks like Mrs. Jennings," said Jane, as they emerged from the row of alcoved stones. "Yes, it is she," continued Jane, for the young woman was walking briskly towards them, and her personality could now be easily distinguished. "What can she want?"

"You, of course," said the candid Judith. "I'll

run along. I really have to get to that shoe store in time to meet a mother and her hopefuls. And their feet are never easy to fit."

The young woman in the brisk, dark, business suit, now saw and recognized the girls. There was nothing of the sorrowing widow in her appearance nor in her manner; both Jane and Judith noted that with satisfaction.

"What a surprise!" said Jane genuinely, as they met. "We have been just talking about you."

"Thanks. And it's good to get on a campus again," returned the stranger. "I just had to come. Hope you are not going out, Miss Allen."

"No. I am glad to see you and will go right back with you to our quarters. We lodge at Madison," she explained. "Come right along."

Mrs. Jennings glanced at the brick and stone dormitories surrounding them. "I am quite familiar with this place, of course," she said, "but living near to Wellington I thought it most exciting to go to a far away college. The old story about familiarity, you know," she ended ruefully.

Jane introduced Judith and after the usual pleasantries she and Mrs. Jennings turned back to Madison, while Judith went along to her shoe store.

Up in room "nineteen" Jane made her visitor comfortable.

"This is where I entertained little Joy and Jill," she said, rather proudly, "and only yesterday our supervisor called upon me again to explain *why* I brought them here."

"Oh, you mean a social worker is never supposed to—take a child into a private home?" asked Mrs. Jennings. "When I studied sociology I believe they did try to make us see the wisdom of that, but" she objected, "I can see no reason why you should not have done so."

"I did not know just then how much of a point they all make of it," confessed Jane, "but I *did* know the children would be dreadfully upset if I took them away to the——"

"Asylum," assisted Mrs. Jennings as Jane stumbled over using the hateful word. "I should say they would. I can just imagine what my babies would do if they were actually taken into a perfectly strange place even for a night."

"Well, you see, I had the family friendship on my side," Jane explained. "Father and your family have been friends for years, and your mother, Mrs. Castbolt, had partially promised me a visit with the babies. I was just dying to have my friends see them. So I was able to

establish my rights to the satisfaction of the office, although," Jane paused, "I do not believe I would have the courage to do the same thing over again. There is some compensation in ignorance, isn't there?"

"You were a good friend then, Miss Allen, and I wonder can I reasonably ask you to be a good friend again?" The question was put most seriously.

"I shall do anything within my power——"

"I felt you would," interrupted Mrs. Jennings. "We are almost ill, all of us, worrying. You saw Renny at the prom?"

"Yes."

"And that girl's influence is flagrantly apparent?"

"I do not believe she has any real influence with Mr. Castbolt," said Jane hastily. "He gave me the impression of being—bored with her," Jane actually said.

"Oh, I breathe easier," exclaimed Mrs. Jennings with a pathetic smile. "You know Renny is such a boy, and I have had my own experiences with—Carol Dare."

"Not that I am not in a position to guess at your brother's motives," said Jane, smiling pleasantly, "but so far as I could judge, he has not

much interest in—public dancing. He inferred so, frankly.”

“I know Renny pretty well and I have felt he was only doing this to help us——” faltered the young woman. “But mother and Aunt Mary are almost distracted over it. You see, coming right into his own home town——”

“Yes, I can easily understand how that would affect you,” Jane said. “But the dance was beautifully done. One thing certain, Carol Dare can dance.”

“I have seen her, and as you say, she does execute some wonderful figures,” agreed the other. “But you have relieved my mind. I have listened so much to the worries of mother and auntie that I suppose I had begun to believe some of the alleged fancies were very real. But, Miss Allen, I have come to see you about Renny. He is determined to leave his college. You see our note will actually be due very soon, and he feels it would be cowardly for him to stay there complacently, and allow us to face——”

“Have you had any word from your uncle?” asked Jane.

“Yes, my aunt wrote and he answered. He is as obdurate as ever, and someone keeps him informed upon our actions. He knew all about

my foolish attempt to get an engagement," admitted Mrs. Jennings.

"Didn't I understand someone to say that Miss Dare goes into his office?"

"She has a friend who works there, and I believe she did call upon uncle for a contribution to some fund——"

"Then, isn't it likely she has told him all—the news?" Jane felt more hopeful with each sentence. It was so much better to be talking than just to keep thinking in circles.

"But my uncle would scarcely listen to one of her type. He is so opposed to theatrical folks," said Mrs. Jennings, "and she is so—flashy."

"Yet," insisted Jane, "he may have a softer spot in his heart for you than you give him credit for. Do you suppose it would do any good if I were to call upon him?"

"Oh, if you would!" The eyes that had blinked nervously up to this time now looked steadily into Jane's. "I hated to ask you, but I have hoped upon hope that something would influence Uncle Reynolds to—be reasonable. It isn't as if we were asking anyone for anything outright, we just want a loan," again she apologized.

Jane almost sighed. So many people wanted that kind of loan, she had come to know, even

in her short experience with the family case work.

"I tell you," she spoke up, beaming with a new interest, "I'll go out to Trent City and have a little chat with Mr. Webster. I have had a letter from Dad and that will give me an opening. He will, I am sure, be interested in meeting a daughter of Henry Allen's, even if she does finally have to broach a delicate subject."

"Miss Allen, I can't tell you how I feel——"

"I know all about it," Jane interrupted kindly, "but don't count too much on the outcome. I may be more unpopular than an—actress. I believe there is a general antipathy toward Social Service workers as a class, and I hope I shall not be obliged to show my credential to your uncle until I have reached his heart through the claim on Dad's friendship."

So, the important step was finally planned, and the rich old uncle had no possible means of knowing anything about the trap Jane was setting for his retarded family sentiment.

CHAPTER XXI

A LION IN HIS DEN

SITTING in the outer office of the Webster suite in the New Baird, Jane experienced a premonitory twinge. She was sensitive, as all highly strung temperaments are apt to be, and she rather dreaded opposition directly aimed at her motives. She would hate to have this important Mr. Webster accuse her of meddling.

"Too late to get fussy and choosy now," she told her misgivings. "You are in Social Service not Social Conventions."

A liveried boy appeared, and in a way without words made known that Mr. Webster would now see the caller in his private office.

Jane looked a veritable business poster as she followed the functionary. From the cut of her tailored suit (it really was her skating costume), to the tilt of her brushed wool cap (also a sport requisite), she looked smart enough and sufficiently businesslike to satisfy the most exacting.

The usual mahogany and glass equipment confronted her within the second door. Also, she there looked upon the one trim clerk who sat, with head bowed, over a corner desk, while at the big central desk she met the eyes of a man—Mr. Reynolds Webster, certainly.

He gave her one sharp look and then pointed to a chair. It was so near his own Jane felt like shifting it a little, but she merely adjusted it a foot further back as she took it.

"Miss Allen?" said the magnate, not unkindly.

"Yes, Mr. Webster?" Jane's voice betrayed not the slightest subservience.

"Yes, I'm Mr. Webster," admitted the gentleman, "and I believe you are the daughter of my old friend, Henry Allen. How is your dad?"

"I had a letter yesterday and he appears to be in splendid health and spirits," answered Jane promptly, glad the conversation had started on safe lines.

"Henry was always in good spirits," confirmed the big man with the wonderful gray head. Jane felt she had scarcely ever seen a head of hair so gloriously gray and so becoming. He shifted politely in that friendly attitude, Jane decided. "And I believe you are at Wellington?" he asked further.

"Yes, a senior there. The last year is crowded with possibilities, if not fraught with pitfalls," ventured Jane.

"That's about right, I guess," replied Mr. Webster. "But for a young woman, college seems a requirement. I am not so sure it is always good for young men, though. It keeps them out of the business field too long. Gives others a chance to walk off with the—plums," he concluded; and Jane saw the case of Renny "going down."

She had determined that the only way to go at her task was to go at it promptly; no hedging, fencing, nor pretenses. And the man before her seemed to make that plan more imperative than she had even imagined it would be. It would be obviously impossible to coax or cajole Mr. Webster. Jane decided that, before she had gone into the second paragraph of her conversation with him.

"But college also keeps young women away from their chances," she smiled, "and don't you think we need all the opportunity we can claim, these days?"

He chuckled. "I have heard folks say something like that," he admitted. "Girls at home do have a sort of start on you. But then, you learn

business at college, and homemaking is a business proposition," he declared earnestly.

Jane nodded assent. Was this intended as a reference to Mrs. Castbolt's home, she wondered?

Now was her time to fire the first gun. She figuratively jerked the cord.

"You may possibly know, Mr. Webster, that I am taking a special course in Social Service," she began bravely. But he interrupted:

"That's the agency that tells us how to spend our own money, isn't it?" There was just a shade of irony in the query.

"Not so bad as that," defended Jane. "We only try to tell you how to give your money away," she corrected.

"Pretty good! That sounds just like Henry Allen!" he chortled. "I don't mind that nearly so much as having an agent checking up on my cigars." And again he coddled a laugh until it wheezed.

Jane was now feeling more at ease. At least he was not going to "bite her head off," and there was something about him very like her dad. Perhaps the mines had turned out good natured human products in their time.

"I hope you won't think I am interfering in your private affairs, Mr. Webster," she began

Jane felt a little shiver tickle her consciousness under his scrutiny. This was clever fencing, after all.

"Ren was a promising boy," mused the uncle, presently, "and for the life of me, I can't see what got into him."

"I believe he is doing splendidly at college," Jane said. Now it was her turn to squirm. She hated to talk of Renny Castbolt's private affairs.

"At college, perhaps," conceded her host. "But what's got him to going around doing foolish dances at parties? Who ever heard of a self-respecting young man going into that sort of thing?" His opposition was now unmistakable.

"I believe he is able to earn money that way," Jane replied, "and he has, I believe, not actually gone into public. Among colleges there is a sort of fraternal understanding concerning private performances. Many of the best send regular troops out on the road during holidays."

"They do?" he snapped.

"Yes. Dramatic and other talent of the students can be used and even developed in that way. And you know there is always the chronic fund to be worked up. This sort of thing helps a whole lot."

"Oh, I know that. What I haven't been asked

to support hasn't been thought of yet—but it will. I have no doubt of that," he nodded fatuously. Again he pushed his papers aside. This move portended direct action on the question, Jane knew.

"And you say he gets money that way? It must be precious little——" he almost scoffed.

"No, Mrs. Castbolt told me he sent home one hundred dollars the other day," Jane informed the objector.

"Don't say? Well, that's not so bad. But who would pay that for a dancer?" he wanted to know.

"This young woman who arranges for the performances is rather a shark of a business woman, I believe," said Jane, hating herself for doing so. "And she makes all the engagements."

A frown glowered over the bushy brows. The "young woman" was no favorite, evidently.

"And a nephew of mine," every word was drawn out scornfully, "is willing to dance in public with—an actress?"

"I didn't know Miss Dare was a professional—that is, I did not understand she was publicly known as such," said Jane, weakly.

As they talked she had noticed the girl at the corner desk shift around uneasily from time to

time. Just now she glanced up in open question to Jane's remarks.

"Miss Stone," said Mr. Webster addressing her, "you may take dictation from Mr. Matthews, if you will."

The girl, pad, and pencil, also the inquiring look, disappeared through the glass door, promptly.

"They are confidential, of course," he referred to the secretary, "but even confidence has its limitations," he argued wisely.

Secretly Jane applauded. She had been rather embarrassed with the young woman's presence. Her own work was so very confidential, yet she could not have suggested the private conference now being arranged. She picked up courage instantly. She would now defend Renny Castbolt in spite of his uncle's prejudice.

"You see, Mr. Webster," she went on, "when I undertook to investigate Mrs. Castbolt's difficulties I did so because dad expressed a wish to have me keep away from the general work. Not that I am above it," she hurried to make plain, "but because he was opposed to me doing anything at all in the Social Service line. He's a dear old fashioned dad, of course," Jane conceded, "but he scarcely realizes a young woman's idea

of true democracy. For instance, that the humblest case coming under the demands of confidential registration may represent the welfare of not only one worthy person but of an entire family, would never occur to him," she explained. "Circumstances are such subtle facts to deal with, but still they are often very obstinate."

"Worse luck," commented her listener. "Of course, my dear young lady, I would object strenuously to anyone describing me as a hard-hearted brute, you understand, and very likely I have even done some little things now and again to help such work as you are engaged in," he continued humbly, "but the fact is, I cannot stand my own folks betraying inefficiency. We are Websters," he declared, "and we always succeed. You must know they have all been provided for——"

"I do," interrupted Jane. "And I also know that Mrs. Jennings made a foolish business venture at a critical time."

"Exactly. And with that same lady her brother is in partnership with," said the uncle, sharply. "How do you account for that? It doesn't exactly jibe, does it?"

Jane now felt her apparent necessity of concentration. It was not an easy task to explain

away the business weakness of the two Castbolts.

"But with Mr. Castbolt," she said, "it is merely a matter of performing for a prearranged sum; with his sister it was different. She trusted to precarious conditions and possibilities," Jane felt her words were scarcely direct enough, yet she feared to be too frankly positive. Aggressiveness? Never in Jane's plan!

"Well?" said Mr. Webster. This one word meant plainly "what do you propose" and Jane took up the challenge instantly.

"If Mr. Castbolt can stay at college for a few more months he will have a degree that will give him the best possible chance in business," she declared. "If he leaves now,—which he threatens to do and will surely do unless his mother's anxieties are relieved—he will have lost what they have all made such sacrifices to obtain. A man from that college is a master engineer, and even dad would be glad to have Mr. Castbolt go out our way and take up engineering. He has retired actively, of course, but he still controls big interests."

"Oh, ho!" sang out the financier. "So that's it! Got it all fixed up to take the boy——"

"Oh, really," interrupted Jane in burning con-

fusion, "nothing is arranged nor even thought of. I merely mentioned the chance that can come to a graduate of Sargeant's." Jane was blushing furiously and Mr. Webster was enjoying the sight of it. "Dad *did* say they could use a new man," she managed to continue, "and I naturally was reminded that Mr. Castbolt would soon be ready to take a position."

"You don't mean to tell me that Henry Allen would stand for a degree?" scorned the veteran of the mining business.

"No, he would not," declared Jane. "Dad would not be influenced by a college guarantee, but many others would, and dad has become so modern since I came to Wellington, that he speaks of college men in terms of graduates," Jane faltered. "You know, and he knows, that big contracts are not given to men who cannot be vouched for, and only a degree can vouch for any complete competency." Jane felt like a valedictorian but stuck to her guns.

After that, Mr. Webster did not hesitate to confer with himself secretly. He left Jane sitting there while he did so. The big, gray head bent over articles on his desk quite invisible to his earnest eyes, and his broad shoulders were

squared to support any reasonable burden. His entire attitude was one of concentration.

After a few tense moments he turned to Jane. "I'll tell you, young lady, what I'll do," he said. "The holidays are almost here, and the young fellow will have some time on his hands. No use leaving him to dance his reputation away—what he has left of it," he qualified; "so I'll arrange to take him in here—just to see what he can do. We have plenty of the work he is supposed to understand, and this will show what sort of use he has been making of his precious time. I'll give him a regular salary—no bounty or anything of that kind—and when he does wind up his famous college course, perhaps we can come to regular terms. In the meantime you can tell my sister not to worry. No one is going to put her into the poor house," he said blandly.

Jane knew what all this meant. He had capitulated. Renny would be taken into the office and then Carol Dare would be obliged to look for a new dancing partner!

A wave of secret satisfaction suffused her as she expressed her thanks to Mr. Webster.

"After all," she said, "I did not think of that. You see you know more about Social Service than I do. We always try to find a means of

assisting the applicants to help themselves. This is—ideal.”

And she went off with a picture of Carol Dare's indignation, a vision of Mrs. Castbolt's and Mrs. Jennings' delight, and a faint, far away sketch of Renny Castbolt's attitude toward her accomplishment.

Which, she wondered, would ultimately stand the search light of a fair trial?

CHAPTER XXII

JUBILANT JUDITH

NOT even Jane's wonderful news quieted Judith to the point of listening to it.

"I knew it! I knew it!" she kept telling Jane. "I found dear, old Grandpa all sad and lonely in the pokey, little place. She had lured him away with false promises," declared the excited senior.

"Sit down, do," begged Jane. "You have your hat on crooked and the fringe of your scarf is locked in your bag. There." Judith came down but not exactly sitting. "Now let's hear your wonderful news."

"I found him at the Rankin place," began Judith. "That niece, if she is worthy of the title, actually told him he must leave here. That if he did not she would tell other members of the family who would promptly clap him into an institution. As if he is indigent—a man willing and well able to work at some things," she qualified.

"But it is not unusual for families to try to get rid of old folks by clapping them into institutions," remarked Jane. "How did he happen to go to these Rankin people?"

"The poor, old fellow!" Judith's sentiment was in her way. "That Carol Dare came here and first offered to bribe him——"

"How?"

"Said she would get him a place to tend horses, and you know he just loves animals——"

"I didn't," said Jane, dryly.

"He does," reiterated Judith. "Well, she took him off and after she had him all worked up to the wonders of living on some mythical millionaire's bounty, she asked him to go out to Ivy Hall; that's the Poor Farm, you know, and to stay there until she completed arrangements."

"Of course he didn't go?"

"Not he. He ducked, ran, scooted and fled," panted Judith. "Under pretense of wanting something from the little store he went there, and I guess he got out the back way, for he escaped," she finished gleefully.

"And what about Miss Dare? Isn't she looking for him?"

"All the good it will do her! He knows better

now. I, Judith Stearns, told him what a simpleton he was, and how he should have let me know in time to tell him the same thing before he started off. Now I can't possibly ask to have him taken back here; and our scientific system at the office would never agree to considering his case over again; so there you are."

"But how is he situated at the Rankins?" pressed Jane with real interest. Her own successful morning at Mr. Webster's office lent benefaction to the whole world of needy ones, including, especially, Grandpa Todd.

"Not situated a-tall," droned Judith. "Merely staying there hiding, and fearful the wonderful Dare will find him out. But Janie, I told you she would quiz him. She wanted to know all about our work at Castbolt's."

"But he knew nothing about it," parried Jane.

"Certainly not." Judith was emphatic. "But she actually wanted the simple, old soul to go out to Castbolt's and tell them that we, you and I, were simply using their distress as a means to obtain facts. I suppose she said 'statistics' for when I suggested that term he agreed to it, but 'facts' were his words. He was indignant that she should malign us, you may be sure. She asked him to turn the family against us in any

way he could, but especially she insisted that our work at the bureau was all bluff, done for college material, and in no way connected with the regular service."

"No danger of the old man taking that commission," said Jane, "but still, if he had not known us pretty well he really might have suspected us."

"I knew, just as well as could be, that Carol Dare would never let that dear, old man alone, once she found out he was here, and that I, your best friend, brought him here. I am your best friend, am I not?" cooed Judith.

"Unconditionally," replied Jane, beaming and glowing. "Is that all, Judy?"

"Not quite. I asked Grandpa some questions myself," she admitted.

"Along what line, pray?"

"How this little Sarah Smith got to be Carol Dare, and what might have become of some of the money she has invested for other folks," said Judith bluntly. "Ever since you told me she took Mrs. Jennings' money, I have been wondering how many automobiles she bought with it."

"Judith Stearns!"

"The same. Don't you think she would take a flyer on another girl's money? I don't mean

that she would steal it, but she might make a very poor personal investment that would never, by any chance, net profit," declared Judith without apology.

"Oh, I guess she tried to get the theatrical appointment for Mrs. Jennings," Jane said. "She waited around offices and all that, I'm sure."

"No sign that she paid for the waiting opportunity though," retorted the other student.

"What could be her motive for trying to harass those people, Judy? She wouldn't exactly get rich on their pittance," deliberated Jane.

"No, that's not the idea, Jane. I wonder you are so sweetly innocent."

"As to what?"

"To Carol Dare's motives, of course."

"You mean she has designs upon Renny? Queer way to get around him, don't you think?"

"You are still raving," Judith assured her chum. "She is not trying to get around him, she is trying to get him. Just wait and see if I am not right. I have sent Grandpa Todd out scouting."

"Judith, you must not do the least thing in this case," warned Jane. "It is a principle, you

know, that only one can be on a case at a time, and whatever you would do could not possibly seem authorized, especially if you went about it secretly." Jane was annoyed now. What if her good natured friend should lead her into trouble? This was a confidential matter and should surely not be treated lightly.

Judith saw her discomfiture. "Oh, don't worry, old dear," she crooned, "I'll not disgrace you. But I am not going to let any Dare woman interfere with my case. Grandpa was here and she lured him away. There is no denying that. Also, she tried to get him to blackmail us—is that what you call it? Surely you cannot condone that," she went on. "All I did was to ask him to ask her a few questions. She doesn't have to answer them if she thinks they would go against her," finished Judith defiantly.

"Well, be careful, that's all, Judy. I know your heart, but I have not quite as much confidence in your——"

"Head? Say it and perish," threatened the other, raising a pillow in mid-air. "And now go ahead and tell me about your trip. What did Uncle Webster say?"

"Nothing more for you to report?" asked Jane. "I was all set for a thriller."

"I have the clue and the thriller is on the way," replied Judith. "I told Grandpa to ask Carol Dare who was behind all the financial pressure that was being put upon the Castbolts. You know, Jane, it is very unusual for that sort of trouble to come so unexpectedly. They have always had plenty of means, or at least sufficient, and just when the handsome young man—ahem—when he is about to turn himself out of college with honors, then something blocks the play," declared Judith.

Jane laughed. Judy was, as ever, irresistible, but the grain of reason given out was unmistakable. In fact, it had occurred to Jane that the situation at her friend's home had developed rather suddenly.

"I had a very good time at Mr. Webster's office," she volunteered. "I thought you would be so anxious to know the details you would come to meet me, instead of which you tell every last word of your own story first," Jane pouted, prettily.

"Simply clearing the tracks, dear, I want a perfectly fresh mental plate for your tale. Now proceed. I am all properly focussed."

"I won out," said Jane calmly.

"As to what?" asked Judith.

"The entire proposition."

"Will he pay off the debt?"

"I didn't want him to do that. You know we don't work that way, Judith. I am surprised that you expect such spectacular tricks from real, standardized work."

"Oh, I think he should at least relieve their worries," proposed Judith. "We had a little of that in class this afternoon. Our sociology seems rather tame under Professor Maibe now, doesn't it?"

"Yes, theory is nothing like practice, after all," said Jane. "But you must not ask miracles. They're not healthy these days, Judith."

"Then, in what way did you win out?"

"This good old unk is going to take Renny into his office," Jane intoned, in a real sing-song voice.

"Oh goody-good!" echoed Judith. "That's a miracle! See if it isn't! Now what will Carol Dare do, poor thing? Go out in the barn, and keep herself warm, and hide herself under her wing, poor thing!" she chanted, using the old nursery rhyme to suit her special purpose.

Jane laughed and tossed a bon-bon at her companion. It was the hour just after dinner, and many of the girls were out on the grounds

taking a stroll before nightfall. But the two Jays, as they had been affectionately called, were too eager for a chance to tell each other the news to delay it longer than absolutely necessary.

"I thought at first he was going to be grouchy," Jane went on with her story, "but he was just as nice as pie when he found I meant business. Oh, I tell you, Judy, you would have been proud of me if you could have heard me stand up for our rights."

"Pity I couldn't have," said Judith dryly. "But how, when, and where is the boy going into business? Not to interfere with college, of course?"

"During the holidays," Jane informed her, and then continued to relate the entire proceedings. When it came to describing the office surroundings she mentioned the meek and humble secretary who sat in the corner and was dismissed in spite of her assumed discretion.

"What did she look like?" Judith inquired.

"Not flashy but—smart," Jane described her. "She pricked up her ears when the stage was talked of. I hope Carol Dare has not been interesting her in a ka-ree-er."

"How ever does she get into those important offices?" Judith questioned.

"They are all listed, you know; and I expect she works herself in with the colleges by doing an odd good turn for them," Jane said. "Mr. Webster told me she had collected from him, I think."

"I wouldn't wonder but she would be that adroit," reasoned Judith. "I suppose Mrs. Jennings asked you to go to see Mr. Webster, when you went so promptly, dear," she remarked. Just then a step in the hall told of visitors approaching, and Judith was hurrying to get all the points covered before they should arrive.

"No, she didn't ask me but I offered. She was in real distress, and I can hardly wait until morning to go out with the great news. I am mighty glad I have no class 'till eleven. That will just give me time. There's Dozia, and some of her cohorts," Jane broke off. "I suppose they will want to know about it all. But Jude, don't, now, don't tell them anything. You know we cannot discuss——"

"Anybody home?" called the voice of Dozia. "We have come to offer congrats and condoles," she said, entering and draping herself out on the couch. Winifred and Norma were with her and they took the seats most convenient—the pillowed floor.

"Why the congrats?" asked Judith.

"You're popular. Your party was a huge success. The girls are clamoring for a chance to get in on your society course, I mean the poverty course, or whatever you wish it to be known by."

"Thanks; that's lovely. Now what about the condolences? Who sends them and why?" Judith asked again.

"They're for Janie. She's doomed to sorrow. Her wonderful dancer—is—en-gaged!"

"Who?" demanded Jane, not responding to their hilarity.

"Mr. Reynolds Castbolt, the Grecian dancer, who distinguished himself in Apollinarian poses," said Dozia, foolishly.

"What are you joking about, Doze?" asked Jane. "Did you hear anything new?"

"Sure-lee, I did. Why else have I come?" fended Dozia.

"Who says he's engaged?" asked Judith.

"A mutual friend. She knows the young lady very well," drawled the lanky, albeit, graceful Dozia.

"And who, pray, is this young lady?" anxiously inquired Judith.

"Who else but his dancing partner, of course?"

The wonderful light foot, Miss Carol Dare," announced Dozia in semi-professional tones.

Jane and Judith could only gasp. It would take skill to obtain the intelligent details from this group of "reactionaries."

CHAPTER XXIII

SURPRISING NEWS

WE have about twenty minutes before we drift off to that patent lecture, guaranteed to tell us how to obtain handsome husbands," drawled Judith. "They call it something mysterious, but I hope it's that, anyway. So girls, let's get busy. Tell us what you mean by the news?"

"Why, is it so startling?" inquired Dozia. "I had no idea Janie was so far gone. Why couldn't the Greek god become engaged to his dancing partner?"

"Don't be a whimsy, Doze. You know I have no objections to his becoming engaged to the whole Greek kingdom if he sees fit, but the point is——" Jane paused and gave Judith a beseeching look.

"Go ahead," urged the inconsiderate Dozia. "The point is—you were saying——"

"You will have to excuse me from further discussion of private affairs in this way," said Jane, loftily. "I don't think I should be a party to frivolity that borders upon gossip. You see, I have learned something in the despised service course."

"I'll tell Mars you have," answered Dozia, a charming sweep of her long arm and an irresistible note in her well trained voice entirely negating the attempted slang. "All the same, what are we going to do about it?"

"What?" demanded Judith.

"The loss of our hero. He'll never dance for us again," wailed Dozia, helping herself to a red apple and then squashing the big, blue cushion under her left arm.

"We have only a few minutes, Doze," warned Winifred. "Please don't take root there."

"This takes no longer than any other pose and it's heaps more becoming," retorted Dozia. "But really girls, aren't you surprised? Did you think he loved the lady?"

"I don't believe he is engaged," snapped Judith. "According to our best and most reliable information he is booked for a most thrilling career and he will promptly emerge upon it when his college hands out the discharge papers."

Do you fancy a fellow would toss up a chance like that just to go dancing?"

"It has been known to happen," said the tall girl.

"Who told you?" asked Jane, collecting her lecture material and preparing to break up the party.

"A friend."

"Someone who knew what she was talking about?" Judith particularized.

"Well, she's a very great friend of the young lady in question," replied Dozia, disconnecting her arms from the pillow. "She simply 'adores' Carol, according to her own admission."

It was useless to probe further. The students went reluctantly to Downs, the hall where the uncertainly termed lecture was to be delivered. Beyond a few gasps from Judith to Jane, and a series of significant nudges given in return, the unexpected and unwelcome news was disposed of for the time being.

Quickly as the regular work was finished next day, and the time for social field work entered upon, Jane hurried to the office to make a brief report and then hastened out to Castbolt's. Judith had determined to seek out Mr. Todd again, and ask him what he knew about the

reported engagement; so she set forth on that quest.

It was disquieting, to say the least. Yet, unlikely as it seemed that young Renny Castbolt would become engaged just when so much depended upon him, still, as Dozia flippantly remarked, "it had been known to happen."

Jane determined not to make any reference to the engagement report in her talk with Mrs. Castbolt and Mrs. Jennings—she hoped both would be at home. She would simply bring them the good news of Mr. Webster's change of heart, and depend upon circumstances to adjust the remaining uncertainties.

It was a bleak, drab day—winter was crushing a heavy heel upon the last hopes of vegetation, and outdoor growth. It soon would snow—the air was thick with an invisible blanket and a gloom unmistakably that of real, despotic Winter. Jane alighted from the trolley and made haste to the Castbolt homestead. The children were playing out of doors and they rushed to meet her. Hanging on either side of her coat they accompanied her to the living room, prattling in childish glee that she could have come to see them again.

Only a few minutes were allowed the tots to

indulge their delight in, then Mrs. Jennings banished them again to the "fresh air," thus affording Jane and her news full and free scope.

It was unbelievable—Mrs. Castbolt said so, and Mrs. Jennings beamed the relief she was experiencing.

"I found him entirely reasonable," said Jane, "and I had no trouble whatever, in bringing him to an understanding. You know I always told you that an old gentleman's heart is the most reliable of human assets," she contended.

"But you see we have had so little opportunity for really keeping in touch with brother," Mrs. Castbolt was explaining. "He is away so much of the time."

"And you know, mother dear, he has been very stubborn," blurted out youth, in the person of Mrs. Jennings. "I tried to see him, of course. I did not sit back and let this come upon us without doing what I could to prevent it."

"You are right, daughter, you did try to see him. But there was an old grievance, you know."

Jane guessed this reference was to Mrs. Castbolt's marriage, which, she had said, did not suit the temperamental brother.

"It may be only an opening wedge," Jane was

saying, "but I feel once Mr. Castbolt is given an opportunity to show his ability, and the old prejudice against a college boy is dispelled, your family difference will, at least, have been adjusted."

"Renny will show him what he can do," declared the sister, proudly. "He is so much like his uncle that they will be a pair in interests and efficiency in no time. Uncle is a regular shark in business."

If only that report about the engagement were not true, Jane pondered, although she never for a moment credited it; still it was annoying to have it circulated.

Mrs. Castbolt was fussing about, plainly trying to hide her agitation in activity. She listened and talked, but apparently could not sit still. That her brother, Reynolds, should come to their rescue was not one mite less gratifying to her, than was the fact to Mrs. Jennings, that *her* brother, Renny, should be given a chance to show his worth. It was a combination of brothers and son, and while Jane tried to grasp its significance, she just wondered how she would have felt had she ever had a brother starting out in the big and interesting game of life, like this.

"Did my brother say he would keep my son on

after he finished college?" asked Mrs. Castbolt, although the details had been very clearly stated before.

"We did not discuss that," replied Jane kindly. "You see, Mrs. Castbolt, I was depending upon—Renny" (she paused after she used the familiar name) "to solidify the temporary plans."

"Oh, he will, I'm sure he will," repeated the fond mother earnestly.

They were not the sort of persons who gush and gasp over things, but they expressed their relief from the keen anxiety in subtly unmistakable ways, nevertheless.

"Shall we tell Renny at once?" debated the sister. "Or would you wait until he comes home, mother?"

"Tell him at once," decided Mrs. Castbolt. "It will be a great relief to him—this suspense——" She trailed off in a gentle sigh.

"Then," said the young woman, as Jane arose, "do you suppose the—note will be taken care of?"

"I did not mention money, directly," Jane replied. "You will have time to arrange that after your brother comes home. You see the note was extended upon the request of Miss Morgan's office," Jane explained.

"Oh, was it?" exclaimed Mrs. Castbolt.

"I am so glad you could arrange that," replied Mrs. Jennings, earnestly.

Jane could not help marveling at their almost complete lack of business ability. Even she, who had been saved every care by her indulgent father and her loving Aunt Mary, knew enough about business to realize that the extension of a note was merely putting off the day of reckoning. Yet these trusting folks seemed satisfied with the delay!

A brief frolic with Joy and Jill, who had been hanging about the long, low porch windows, completed Jane's visit. With the dignified, but nevertheless sincere thanks of Mrs. Castbolt, and the gleaming, glowing gratitude of Mrs. Jennings heaped upon her, Jane Allen, the erstwhile Social Service student, wended her way back to Wellington.

"I suppose it's all right," she was reflecting. "So far, so good, and the details seem to take care of themselves. I don't feel one bit as if I were really important to the development of the plan," she ruminated. "Bit by bit it just unfolds and I act as a sort of messenger of Fate. But," she reminded herself, "that, in itself, is an important post to fill. If only I don't 'come a cropper' with Carol Dare in the foreground."

Just where the car turned off into another village and the students of Wellington took their pretty, winding paths into the big grounds, Jane found Judith waiting for her.

"I thought you were on that car," she said, "at least I hoped so. Jane, what do you think? I have found the most wonderful place for dear, old grandpa."

"Good for you, Judy! You seem to have all the luck," exclaimed Jane. "I wish I had gone in for grandpas——"

"You don't either, Janie, you are just tickled to death with your own plans. And say! After all, isn't it great to be a part of real affairs? Can you imagine being content with the old-time schedule now?"

"I can but I couldn't again," said Jane. "But come along indoors. I am going to have tea at the Inn. Can I tempt you?"

"Without half trying," Judith assured her. "Next to miracles I like well brewed tea best."

It was over the tea cups the story of Judith's success was unfolded. She met a man at the office who had stopped in just to get a caretaker for his place, and she had almost devoured him, she was so glad of the chance to place Grandpa Todd in that sort of position.

"With a nice, little house," she gurgled. "And Jane, I have the most daring plan! I am going to ask Carol Dare's mother, his own sister, to keep house for him!" exclaimed the unlimited Judith.

"Carol Dare's mother!" repeated Jane, incredulously.

"Exactly. Mrs. Stephen Smith, as nice a little body as one would want to meet. She has been knocking around, trying to keep up with the pace her famous daughter has been setting. You see, the daughter has only just flown from the home nest, and it was the lure of the foot-lights that did the damage," said Judith dryly.

"And you are not afraid to get further involved in her plans? Haven't you had enough to do with the Dare lady in your efforts to help Grandpa Todd without tempting Fate further?"

"Not more than whetted my appetite," boasted Judith. "You don't suppose that I care a fig for a girl who sneaks around trying to undo the things that sensible people are trying to do? Well, I don't, and you don't either. I notice you put through your end of the case without flinching," concluded Judith.

"And Mrs. Stephen Smith is going to set up housekeeping for her brother, Silas Todd? Is

that it?" Jane asked. "I want to get this all straightened out, and I have so many names in my mind I might easily confuse them."

"You have it correct," replied Judith. "But you should see Grandpa when I told him! The poor, old dear! He was still afraid Carol Dare would hustle him off to some institution," she paused and looked whimsically at Jane. "And I have been saving the real gem of news until the last," she said finally. "Are you sure you won't have more tea?"

"No, this is the last. Go on with the thriller."

"Well, Carol Dare is engaged to marry the young man you have seen out in the little runabout with her," said Judith. "Her mother and her uncle know all about it. She is not really as bad a scout as she pretends to be. She has been friendly with this youth since her precarious school days, and her mother says she would not possibly think of deceiving her on that score. Of course Mrs. Smith has more faith in her daughter than we have, but that's natural. Still I think if Carol is engaged to this Mr. Scott our Renny is comparatively safe."

"Queer how the report should get around," mused Jane, with a glimmer of relief. "But the girls often get things twisted."

"Very often," agreed Judith. "Now Jane, wasn't I a good girl to find out all of that? And wasn't I the bestest girl ever to get Grandpa Todd and his nice, prim knocked-about sister reunited? He is safe, she is safe. I call that good work," Judith flattered herself.

"Splendid," agreed Jane. "If only mine turns out as well we may take our holidays in peace."

"Oh, it will," declared Judith. "But I would feel a lot better about it, Janie, if your rich, old Mr. Webster said he would fix the Castbolts up financially; I cannot see why he didn't."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CONFESSION

BUT we have families of our own to be considered, Jude," Jane declared to her chum a day or two later, "and my dear, adorable dad is coming on for the holidays. And wonder of wonders! We are both to visit Mr. Reynolds Webster!"

"Oh!" said Judith softly. "And I am going home!"

"But our big plans will be safely launched before you leave," Jane consoled her chum. "You see, Renny's school (just notice how naturally I say "Renny") she parenthesized, "his school closes one week before our's will. They went to work a week earlier you remember."

"How does that help me?"

"Our original, handsome young man will be here and installed in the big 'New Baird' before you turn away," Jane was enthusing. "I may as well admit, Jude, I am sorry you are not going to be with me for Christmas, but I am awfully

glad that dad is coming. Aunt Mary has sought a warmer clime. Dear, little lady! She suffers in our violent winters."

"So do I," said Judith, "'specially when I am worrying about new skates and there is no ice."

A call to class put an end to their talk and thus the day wore on.

A rush of events followed. The Christmas holidays brought festivities to college as well as the better prospects at home, and into the plans Jane and Judith plunged, laying aside all other and outside considerations except Judith's boys. They would be cheered and feasted—Judith had a competent committee helping her to that end—but otherwise Social Service field work was held in abeyance for the holidays. It was during a confidential talk with Miss Morgan that Jane learned why she had been kept at the Castbolt case. It was because her father, Mr. Henry Allen, had asked the office to do him the favor of keeping his daughter at that particular piece of work to insure her absolute, personal safety while she was serving an apprenticeship in her selected course. Jane had not resented the supervision when she heard of it. It was just like her dad, and she said so. And after all, she had found the piece of work exciting enough to

furnish the variety a novice might naturally have expected.

Nor had Judith been allowed to choose her particular field undirected. Miss Morgan assured Jane, who promptly told Judith, that the reason why she had been given the truants to "round up," was because she was so young, and so impressionable, that the more sordid cases were wisely withheld from contact with the glowing, brilliant senior.

"You have both put in a splendid term at good training," Miss Morgan told Jane, "and it will be time enough for either of you to see real poverty, and its unhappy details, when you are postgraduates instead of happy grads."

"Cheated!" said Judith without the slightest evidence of meaning it. "I love my boys—but——"

"You have had Grandpa," Jane reminded her.

"And I have him still," orated Judith, as if she were declaiming. "Ye strangers on my native sill!" etc., she chanted.

Wellington was in such a tangle of holly and mistletoe that Dozia said it got in her soup, as well as her stocking—that very long, dark green article that was hung from the very middle of the mantlepiece in the assembly room, when the

students were celebrating before leaving for their homes. Callers were now coming and going, and just now a caller came to Madison and asked for Jane.

"Oh!" gasped Judith. "It must be he!"

And it was. Mattie said Mr. Reynolds Castbolt was down in the parlor waiting.

"Come with me, Judy, please do," begged Jane. "I shall faint and fall if you don't."

"I would do more than that to save an accident now," said Judith with comic reflection. "I'll go if I have to," she assented, although she would not have missed it for worlds.

The seniors were looking very pretty—the festivities of the day painted pleasure on their faces and lent them a special glow of yule-tide expectancy, as they went into the conventional parlor, there to meet the waiting caller.

But Christmas was with him as well, for he seemed to fairly exhale the joyous season's inspiration, and it struck both girls instantly, that this was a very different young man from him whom they had met under the unusual circumstances, connected with the prom.

Greetings were exchanged, and then Mr. Renny Castbolt in the simplest possible way extended both to Jane and Judith his mother's in-

invitation to spend a day with them if they were going to be in the vicinity longer.

"I also wanted to come on my own account," he said a little awkwardly, "as I had a message of my own to bring. You have done me a great favor, Miss Allen," he said, "and I have already put in one good day at Uncle Web's office. I like it first rate, and I think he—will get used to me in time," he ended.

"You are there already?" Jane betrayed her eagerness in spite of her original intentions not to do so.

"Yes; I got off before I expected to and I lost no time in keeping the uncle to his word," he replied. "I care more about proving to him that I am no—softie, than I actually do about obtaining the employment. Not that I don't appreciate that as well," said the young man hastily. "But you know a fellow hates to be considered a slacker in anything."

It was difficult for him to express exactly the feeling he was struggling with, but both girls understood him, and agreed silently, that he was right in defying the uncle's adverse criticism.

Renny Castbolt was so very good looking! Jane and Judith just wondered about the engagement report, but of course, there was no possible

chance of even mentioning Miss Dare to him.

They talked of college sports; he was on the football team and he enthused over the next prospects at that sport.

"I hope after the holidays to have things straightened out at home," he ventured, "then I can finish up with colors, if not actually flying, at least in the wind," he remarked dryly.

"We may see some of your games," said Jane. "I don't think my friend and I will have to do any more special work. We have covered the famous two hundred hours field work allotted to us."

"That's fine," he said. "And, oh yes, the uncle wished me to say that he would save his contribution to your building fund for you if you wished to call. You had better take him up on it. No telling who else might run in and get it, you know," concluded Renny Castbolt, with a boyish smile.

"We will be there tomorrow," declared Jane promptly. "I would not have asked him for it, but since he has offered we will be very glad to get it. You see, my dad is coming to town, as you may have heard, and Wellington expects one to do wonders when the paters arrive."

"I hope you two girls will not book up all

your dates until I have a chance to look over local events," Renny said politely. "I am free now—no more special numbers after this."

Neither girl replied directly. Both were secretly rejoicing in that implication. It meant, that he was not going to do any more dancing with Carol Dare!

When he was gone, a few minutes later, Jane and Judith fell into each other's arms like two high school girls. They were bubbling over with merriment, and when Dozia, who was passing along the hall as their caller left, accused them of "holding out on her," they frankly admitted they had received invitations from the very nice young man, and Jane even went so far as to say she would undoubtedly take advantage of, at least, a few of the local holiday dances with Renny Castbolt, as she was going to visit his uncle at Donnymead.

"And I have to go home," wailed Judith.

"Me too," lisped Dozia, regardlessly.

[An exodus of students now swept through the corridors continuously. If one didn't happen to fall over a bag she was apt to take up the wrong coat or muff, and what was missing in actual calamity was readily supplied in girlish laughter and merry greetings.]

"If only that old note was not dangling overhead like the proverbial sword," said Jane. "One would think from the attitude of the Castbolt family that it had been cancelled and the paper burned, as they do it in churches after a campaign," she murmured.

"I suppose the good looking Renny expects to take care of it with his first week's salary," suggested Judith.

"His uncle stated, most particularly, that his salary would be given in the regular pay envelope," said Jane. "But it was lovely of them to send him down with the season's greetings, just the same."

"I'm packing," interrupted her chum. "You run along and distribute the bounty to the hirelings, and when we are both through perhaps you will come with me to pay a flying visit to my dear friend, Grandpa Todd, and his sister, Mrs. Stephen Smith. Norma told me I might take her car so we won't be long going."

Packing is always the same—trying to get too many things in a given space—and Judith's present experience did not differ from the usual. But it was finally accomplished, as it always is, and when Jane came back empty handed after going out laden down with Christmas packages,

they started off in the trim little runabout, for the cottage on the country estate of Mr. Todd's latest benefactor.

Both girls were accustomed to driving cars, although of late neither had given much time to it, their field work being so much more effectively done "by hand," as Jane termed the more humble mode of getting about on foot or by trolley.

"Back to civilization," she remarked as they sped off.

"And glad of it," admitted Judith. "If my boys ever glimpsed me in this car they would never trust me again," she declared.

Jane was surprised to find Judith's "clients" already comfortably established in the commodious cottage, such as is usually given to general caretakers. But no sooner had the visitors entered than they realized there was trouble lurking behind closed doors in the cosy house.

Grandpa greeted them effusively, but even he acted suspicious. Mrs. Smith was a gentle little body who tried to act politely, but could not hide her own nervousness. She rubbed her hands and tied her apron, as if something highly important depended upon the number of times she could perform each of the seemingly useless acts.

The same thought flashed through the minds of both girls. Carol Dare was there and she had brought trouble with her.

"We are just getting settled," Mrs. Smith said, "and the place is going to be very comfortable, I'm sure." She kept on fidgeting as she talked.

"And I have the finest horses to 'tend," said Grandpa Todd. "I can't thank you, young ladies, for bringing me all this good fortune," he declared.

A slight cough sounded from the next room.

"My daughter came in to see me this afternoon," said Mrs. Smith. "I'll tell her you are here."

But there was no need to call her. Before the mother ceased rubbing her nervous hands, or attempted to lay one on the door knob, the portal opened, and Carol Dare stepped forward.

Her eyes showed signs of weeping, and she appeared quite unlike the vivacious dancer who had so distinguished herself at the prom. No one attempted to speak for a moment. The entrance had been almost dramatic. The young woman looked from Jane to Judith, and then tossed her black head to one side scornfully.

"I hope you two are satisfied," she began.

"Daughter!" interrupted Mrs. Smith, in a shocked voice.

"Don't try to stop me, mother," the other continued. "I owe my failure entirely to these two young women," she charged tragically.

"Your failure!" Jane could not refrain from exclaiming.

"Yes. You were determined to block me and I am good enough sport to know when I am beaten. There," she exclaimed, tossing a slip of paper on the table. "There is Mabel Jennings' check for two hundred dollars. If you care to take it to her you will save me the great trouble of mailing it."

Even Grandpa Todd gasped. The paper was really a check!

"It is all very simple," went on Carol Dare, "but we may as well be civil enough to ask you to be seated, while I tell the few necessary things to clear the whole thing up."

Jane looked at Judith and by common consent they accepted the chairs Mrs. Smith was indicating. Her daughter drew a small handkerchief across her reddened eyes. She still looked striking—but how forlorn!

"I had no idea of keeping her money," she began sharply, "but it was the only thing I could

do to get—the dancing partner I wanted.”

“But what had Mrs. Jennings to do with that?” asked Jane, recovering her composure.

“Nothing, neither did Mrs. Castbolt, but Renny Castbolt did, and the only way I could get him to accept engagements was to force necessity upon him.”

No one seemed to understand.

“Still wondering?” she asked. “Well, can’t you see through a brick wall? When I took that money I put those people in a tight box. They would either have to get money or lose their place, and I knew the only way they could get cash was through Renny Castbolt’s dancing.” She was talking quickly now and her listeners were beginning to understand.

“I gave him all we got—never kept a cent. Even though I needed it,” she declared. “All I wanted was to get him to sign a contract. Oh, you can’t know what it means to have talent and ambition and be a complete failure because there is no good dancer to work with,” she exclaimed. “Renny Castbolt was a success from the first. We could have made the best team on the circuit and he had almost agreed. I showed him what depended upon his money, and how foolish he would be to stick to silly college stuff; but just when

he had engaged to take up the spring work with me, and there was nothing left to do but for him to sign the papers——” She stopped.

Her mother made a motion as if to put an arm around her. Grandpa Todd was stifling a cough.

“Let me alone, mother,” she insisted. “You know how hard I have worked to get to this point. I even went after Uncle Todd and took him away from your college——” (this to Judith) “because I knew why you had him there. But in spite of all—and I am no imitator if I do say it—but what’s the use? You have won. Renny Castbolt was here today and he brought back the contract unsigned,” she ended disconsolately.

In spite of her duplicity, a wave of something like pity touched the girls. She had talent and she had ambition; it was not easy for her to accept her disappointment.

“But can’t you get someone else?” Jane asked, kindly.

“No, I shall never try again. I have put too much into it now. It seems like fate,” she declared.

“You are a very good secretary and you can go back to your old position at any time,” Mrs. Smith managed to suggest.

"Don't talk of that," begged the daughter. "I want time—to think."

"You both did dance beautifully," Judith felt compelled to say, "but I can't see why this should seem so tragic to you. There must be more young men willing to dance at such prices as have been offered you," she ventured.

"You don't understand," replied Carol. "Dancing is not like any other art. It depends solely upon inspiration. Renny Castbolt invented his dances. You know there is theatrical talent all through the family," she stated, critically.

"Well," she sighed, "it's over. I am glad not to have to take it to bed with me another night. I hardly knew what I was doing when I went into the plot. It was not originated by me, but there is no use implicating any other," she declared. "No, mother, Jack had nothing to do with it. He doesn't even know anything about it if that is what you are thinking of," she suddenly digressed.

"Jack is the young man she is engaged to," Mrs. Smith politely explained. "I am glad he had nothing to do with it. It is too disgraceful——" She was threatened with tears but Jane promptly reassured her.

"This check will be in time, after all, to pay

off the troublesome note," she said. "So let us not make too much of a tragedy of the affair."

"Tragedy!" exclaimed the other young woman. "When Renny Castbolt decided to go into an old poky office with an irate uncle, the most tragic thing occurred then!"

"She'll be gettin' married," put in Grandpa, "and I tell you the man that gets her won't have to worry about his housekeeping either," he added.

There seemed little more to say. The Wellington girls were now standing ready to leave.

"Don't worry too much," soothed Jane. "We all wish things could be adjusted without these heartbreaks, don't we?"

"But they can't," concluded Carol Dare, sadly.

CHAPTER XXV

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

EVEN the reverend seniors are not immune from excitement, and the morning following Carol Dare's disclosures, found Jane and Judith feeling as if they had crawled through a proverbial knothole. While dressing they continued to comment upon the surprising developments.

"Of course," said Judith, "it was the dancing engagement that the girls had mixed up with the matrimonial market."

"Yes; that's clear enough now," assented Jane, "and I suspicioned it all along. But Judy, do you realize what a day we have before us? Holidays are fun, but they do get awfully cluttered up, even in the preamble."

"By agreeing with you first hand I'll save time," said Judith, "and time today will be more time tomorrow. There! Am I not improving in logic?" she wanted to know.

All of which counted in the hours following.

Jane decided she would save time by running into Mr. Webster's office when she was near there attending to some urgent gift arrangements; especially did she have to go into Snyder's to see if her dad's pipe had been correctly marked.

Judith had a few more pairs of stockings to purchase for her boys. She was trying to give them stockings and mittens, feeling those gifts would mean most to the youngsters during the holidays, when there would be, it was hoped, good skating and some snow balling to attend to.

The air was crisp and snappy, ideal for the season, and when Jane reached the Four Corners near the New Baird building, and in the shopping district, she was surprised to find what numbers of persons were out so early and with such businesslike intent. The city appeared more populous than she had counted it.

"I hope the good old uncle gives me a nice check for our building fund," she prompted inspiration. "We need at least two new dorms for next year."

Up in the elevator and then over to the glass door marked with Mr. Webster's firm's title, she hurried. Pushing open the first door she noticed no boy was there to usher her into the private office.

Delaying just a moment, she then went in unannounced.

What confusion she found that office in! Mr. Webster was rummaging through papers all about his big desk, the private secretary was doing the same thing with files, the office boy was on his knees pulling cardboard files apart, and even an extra girl from the general office was searching in the storage drawers. Papers were literally flying about.

"Good morning——" but even the greeting seemed so inopportune she would have withdrawn it the moment it was uttered.

"Oh, I'm glad you came," spoke Mr. Webster without offering so much as a civil smile. "We are in trouble here, and perhaps you can help us."

"If I can—of course——"

"The fact is one of my most important foreign bonds has disappeared, and there is absolutely no clue to its—hiding place," he finished with a suspicious inflection.

"I had it——" interrupted the girl known to Jane from her previous visit. "I know I had it," she insisted, "and I went to the telephone to answer——"

"That's one of the troubles, at least," fired

back her employer, "you spend so much time answering private telephones, you have no time for business. I want it understood now, right here, that none of my employees are to bring their personal affairs into this office hereafter." His voice thundered, Jane quaked as it roared, and the girl accused cast a piteous glance into Jane's surprised face.

"I'll be back in a moment," said Mr. Webster with a poor attempt at apology for keeping Jane waiting. "I feel the need to talk secretly over the 'phones in my own office until this is cleared up," and he dashed out with his long coat tails flying after him, and the strewn papers fluttering in the breeze and trying to fly along with it.

"Oh, Miss Allen," sobbed the secretary when she and Jane were alone, "it is my fault. I knew the importance of that bond, but a friend, Miss Dare, 'phoned me. She has been in trouble and I have been trying to help her——"

"Yes?" encouraged Jane.

"I did wrong ever to promise her help. You see, she wanted me to let her know what was going on here regarding her—dancing partner."

Jane understood now why this girl showed such keen interest in the first conversation she

and Mr. Webster injudiciously attempted to hold in her presence.

"I did not actually do anything wrong—that is, I hope I didn't," continued the distressed girl, "but there was no one here except Mr. Castbolt when——"

She had not time to finish the sentence for Mr. Webster was back again, his face more flushed and his hair more rumpled.

"You, young lady, may clear out for a moment," he said brusquely. "I'll have a word with Miss Allen." This last was said in a way that included "If she will favor me," so, perhaps, he was not such a bear as he had been pretending to be.

The frightened girl cast a pleading look Jane's way as she went out, and Mr. Webster brushed papers from a chair upon which Jane seated herself unceremoniously.

"I wouldn't care a hang for the bond, money or no money," began Mr. Webster, "but it happened the very first day—my nephew was here," he faltered, dropping his voice to almost a whisper.

"Oh, Mr. Webster!" interrupted Jane. "Please don't throw suspicion upon him! I would swear by his honesty!" she declared, impulsively.

"And I want to," replied the uncle promptly. "There never was a dishonest member of the tribe. But the point is this. That note has just been cancelled on the old house." Again the lowered voice.

"It has?" exclaimed Jane.

"Yes. I sent in to pay it off myself—always intended to do it, but it is a part of my character to let folks understand their own troubles. I never slap money upon a financial wound without first—dressing it up, you know." He was still fumbling with the scattered papers and was still very much excited. "Well, I found the debt paid by order, and the papers withheld—for a short time, they put it; but you know, as well as I do, that no straightforward business is done in that way."

Jane was too surprised to reply. She just sat there, staring.

"Now, don't misunderstand me," continued the man with the rumpled gray hair. "I do not mean to infer that my nephew would take that bond with the intention of keeping it, but the note coming due—I was watching the time—and his salary a week off; well, it is just possible he could reason things out that way," rambled Mr. Webster.

"He couldn't," declared Jane loyally. "Renny Castbolt is not that kind of man."

"Glad to hear you say so! I wouldn't mind you calling me names if you had that talent," he said with a flash of humor returning. "But where is that bond?"

Jane jumped up and laid her hand on his arm. "Please promise me this," she begged. "Don't cast any suspicion, not the slightest suspicion, upon Mr. Castbolt until there is nothing else left to do."

"Exactly! Sound and square!" replied the financier. "I'll gladly agree to that and no questions asked. This being holiday time and all that, I would lay the pesky thing aside, but you see the examiners for those foreign bonds chose this time to come in and look things over; and you know the bonds must run straight through the series."

"Does Mr. Castbolt know the bond is missing?" asked Jane.

"Oh, yes. We began our search last evening," replied Mr. Webster. "But I didn't know then about this debt being cancelled. They sent me in word when my young man went to pay it," he explained. "Renny's so proud," went on the uncle, "and young fellows have such elastic ideas

about strict business principles. I would never think of even connecting these two facts, if I could find out who paid off the note," he finished abruptly, thereby showing his great reluctance to coupling his nephew's name with the loss of the bond.

"Perhaps I can find out something about it," said Jane, on her feet now and ready to leave. "I have been trying to advise, in my inexperienced way," she apologized, "and I am sure Mrs. Castbolt will not mind giving me further confidence. In the meantime, Mr. Webster, keep suspicion away from your nephew. He is proud, and I am sure a breath of it would drive him from splendid opportunity."

"Right there," commented Mr. Webster sharply.

"And dad came to the city yesterday, and will be out here this morning," said Jane anxiously. "Perhaps a sight of him may bring—inspiration," she almost sighed.

"Never expected to have business worries around me like this when he arrived," grumbled the old friend. "Let's hope they will be all cleared up. I'm counting on a good time when Henry Allen comes," he said heartily.

There seemed nothing else to say and Jane

prepared to leave. As she stepped to the door it was opened and Mr. Castbolt entered.

"Find it?" he asked breathlessly.

"Not yet," answered his uncle. Then seeing Jane, Mr. Castbolt forced a smile upon his greeting.

"Some upset," he said, "but papers are often elusive—the very best of them. Uncle, I heard a gentleman asking for you at the station, but I didn't wait to see who he might be."

"Oh, that must be dad!" exclaimed Jane. "Listen! There! I hear him outside. That's he inquiring——"

The voice outside presently developed into the personality of a big, lusty, genial gentleman, all the way from Montana. He stood before them.

"Dad!" shouted Jane.

"Hello girl!" called out the big man.

"Hello there yourself, Henry Allen!" chimed in Mr. Webster, insisting upon an immediate handshake.

"Well, I'll be jiggered, Ren Webster! Good old Webbie!" boomed the man from the West, grasping his friend's hand heartily.

Jane was simply gasping. "Of all the surprises——"

"I'd have been here before, but I stopped to

attend to a little errand. Hope I didn't break any of your rules," he said to Jane, "but I thought I'd like to fetch you a little surprise. Don't let Web see it," he cautioned aside, "but here's a slip of paper you might like to give to your friends. I don't see why an old fellow like me couldn't get a whack at your precious Social Service," he chuckled.

Jane glanced at the paper. It was the cancelled note on the Castbolt Homestead!

"Thanks," she said simply, devouring her father's face with her grateful, gray eyes, and hiding the paper from the possible gaze of young Renny. "This is lovely, Dad. I'll distribute it this very morning. I have something else, like it, to go to the same house."

"That's fine," returned her father proudly, although he could not know that Jane was referring to the check given her by Carol Dare and which was also to go to the fortunate Castbolts.

Renny was introduced, and during the actual process the little blonde secretary burst in with another piece of paper.

"I thought you wouldn't mind the interruption," she said to Mr. Webster, beaming with delight.

"I don't," snapped her employer, grabbing the

paper from her hand at the same moment. It was the missing bond!

"Where?" asked Renny, breathing quickly.

"In that box you suspected," replied the secretary dimpling. She was pretty—Jane noticed it just then.

"Now we are all set!" called out the host, without succeeding in disguising the relief in his voice. "Renny, we'll only attend to personal matters today. Don't mind the interruption Henry," to Mr. Allen, who was just about bouncing Jane up and down in his one armed embrace. "You see, we were a little upset—lost something. Ren, suppose you just go out and fix up that little affair of your mother's."

Jane looked from one to the other, then shook a feeble finger at her dad.

"He went and done it," she said with charming naïveté. "He didn't know any better and we shall have to forgive him." She produced the cancelled note and held it up to Mr. Webster.

"You paid that, when?" demanded the surprised gentleman.

"Late yesterday afternoon," confessed the visitor. "Couldn't come out to see my Janie without helping her a bit with her good work. Sorry Web, I know this strikes home, but we'll

fix it all right, you and I," he nodded understandingly, while his old friend took up the same sort of nod and went on with it. They understood.

"But I intend to attend to that myself——"

"Hush," whispered Jane to Renny, checking his sentence unfinished. "Don't spoil it. Let them have their—fun," and she smiled her understanding until the young man's countenance relaxed.

Then he smiled down at her, and she felt small—he was so tall and so protective. The two old friends were talking eagerly over near the window, and the young folks—well, they were not saying much just then.

The air was tingling with interest, and Jane must have been very happy; for again "youth will be served."

They met Judith at the department store and picked her up, that is they allowed her to jump in, for she was so alert the first insinuation would do her a distinct injustice.

"What a lark!" she greeted them. "I am just ready for it too! If I ever buy another pair of mittens I hope I have a dummy hand along. They are the awfulest—— I don't suppose you know anything about hand sizes," she said to

Renny. "And what's more, you don't care. Neither do I now. Jane, your face is illumined, what's new?"

"Dad!" said Jane simply.

"Come!" exclaimed Judith.

"Eating a second breakfast with Mr. Webster right now," replied Jane, as the car swung off again.

"And you really are going home, Miss Stearns?" Renny lamented. "That's a shame. I'm going to prod the recalcitrant uncle into giving a holiday dance."

"Lovely!" said Judith. "But my usual luck."

"She and her friend Mr. Blair have a skating hike planned—up in Canada, you know," said Jane.

"Fine! Mason Blair?" asked Renny.

"My own darling Toots," replied the incorrigible Judith, falling over Jane, who in her turn jolted the amused driver.

"Get back as early as you can," he suggested. "There's bound to be fun going on this season."

A few minutes later it was a happy gathering that attempted to talk things over at the Castbolt cottage. But the attempt was not very successful, for there were the babies climbing up on Jane and Judith, there was Renny hugging

his mother right before everyone, and there was Mrs. Jennings shouting her lungs out that Grandpa Todd had been over to tell them that Carol Dare was going to be married on Christmas eve!

Was there anything else to be settled? If so it will have to be told in the next volume of this series to be entitled: *Jane Allen: Graduate.*

THE END

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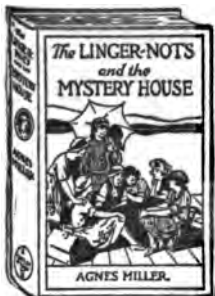
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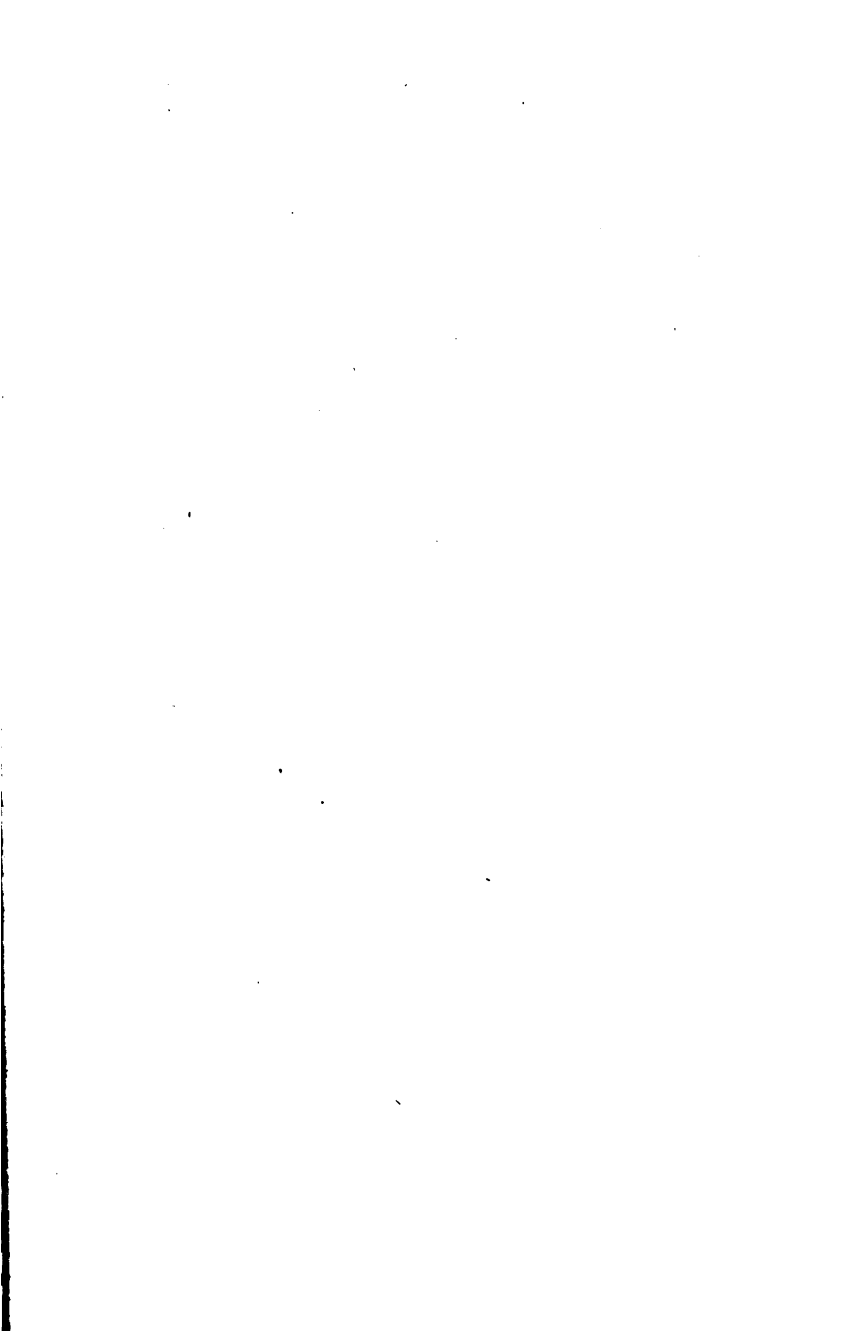
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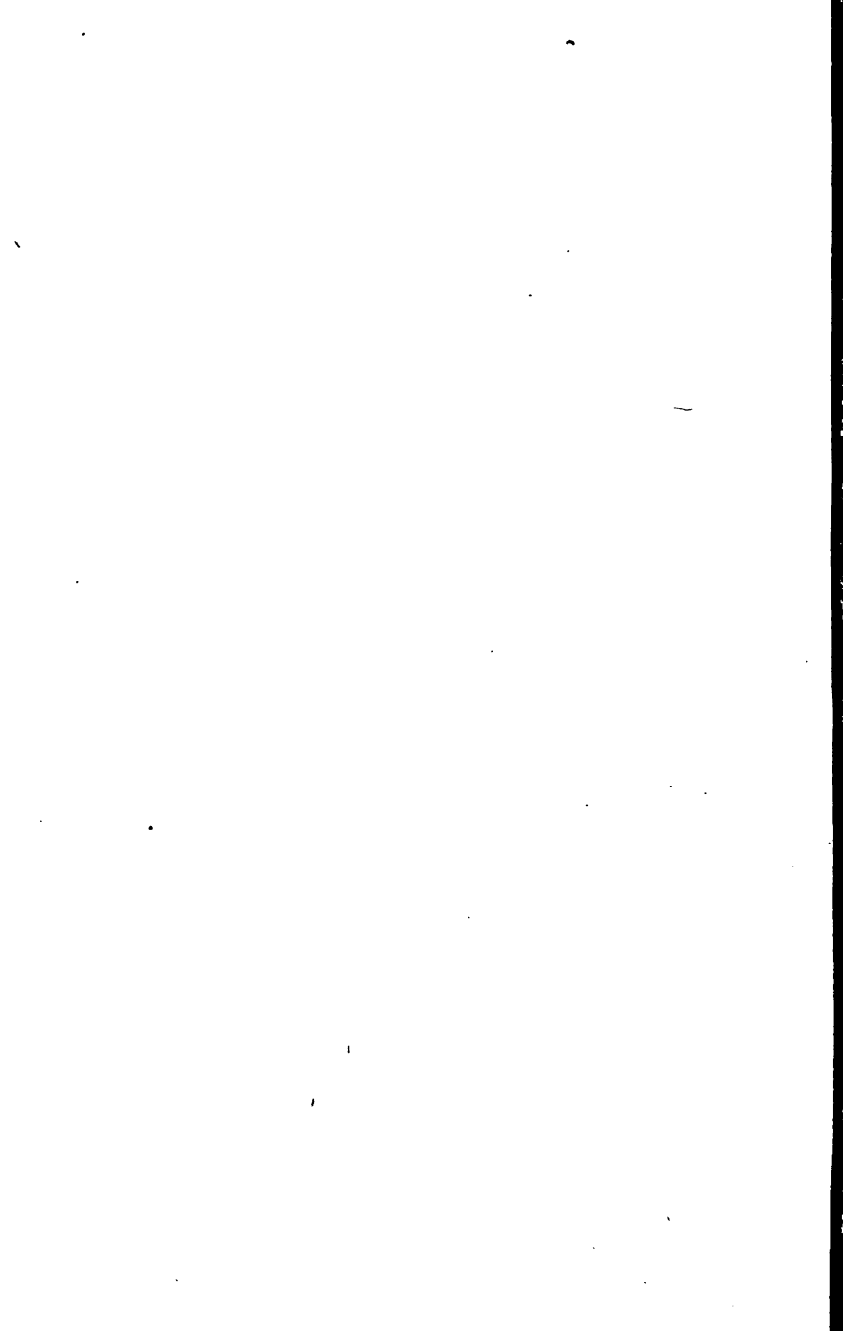
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